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AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1983

blessed to be a blessing

Reflections on the Fifteenth Anniversary of MCC

by Jeffrey Pulling
Samaritan Extended Studies

This year's Fellowship Sunday, October 9, is a celebration of the Fifteenth Anniversary of the founding of MCC (October 6, 1968). As I reflect on our 15 years of trying to build a church that both proclaims and lives God's love for all people, I think of the Biblical theme of "blessed to be a blessing." Genesis 12:1-5 records that Abraham and Sarah, the ancestors of Israel, were sent out by God from their safe, comfortable home into an unknown future in an unknown land with the promise that God would bless them and that they would *be* a blessing. All peoples on earth would be blessed through them.

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah prophesied that the Judeans, who had been conquered and sent into exile, would be brought back together as a people and restored to their homeland. The restored and gathered people of Israel would be a blessing, even though they have been an object of cursing and derision (Zechariah 8:7-13).

In the New Testament the apostle Paul begins his Second Letter to the Corinthians with praise to the Provider of compassion and God of all comfort, "who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4 NIV).

We in MCC have been blessed by God in order that we might be a blessing of God to other people. We have been given many wonderful, exciting people, financial resources, and a daring, demanding mission. All of this is to transform us into a means of God blessing this world in which we live.

It is obvious, of course, that most of the people to whom we are called to be a blessing do not see MCC as a blessing. We stand in the middle between other churches, who denounce us for being Gay/Lesbian oriented and Gay/Lesbian-affirming, and Gay liberationists and Lesbian feminists, who denounce us for involving ourselves in this oppressive and bigoted religious institution, the Church. Somehow, we have to witness to both sides and keep our sanity.

Everything under the sun has been done in the name of Christianity, but those of us who have been influenced and touched by Jesus of Nazareth know in our guts that the essence of what Jesus taught is *love*, not bigotry, intolerance, exclusivism, and moralisms. Jesus embodied God's love for every human being. MCC was called into being not to imitate other churches but to be a different kind of church. We were not gathered together to be just another Christian church only with a lavendar tinge. Rather we are called to be a people who will both proclaim and live God's love for all people.

MCC exists to be a blessing to Gay and Lesbian people. Most Gay and Lesbian people believe in God, of course, but few have any understanding of God, let alone a relationship with God. Many are so turned off by institutional religion that they would never consider that the Church has anything for them. Many have never heard that the essence of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe is *not* cold, stern demands, but rather open, searching love. We have around us many sexual minority people who are miserable, lonely, empty and desperately searching for something. We exist to show God to them, to embody God's love to them.

MCC exists to be a blessing to everyone alienated from traditional religion. We see around us a great search for meaning. People are grasping for something, anything, that can make their life mean something. And for the most part they do not find what they are looking for in a church. Most churches do not offer people any meaning, purpose and direction in their lives. Even those churches that do attempt to do so end up with judgmental, moralistic and narrow religion. MCC exists for everyone, whether they be homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual or asexual. We exist to show all a God who cares, a God who can give meaning and direction to life, a God who meets us and challenges us in real life right where we are. MCC is an option for all seeking an alternative to traditional, patriarchal and judgmental religion.

MCC exists to be a blessing to the rest of the Christian Church. Now you may

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Photos by: Bev Teagle
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General Conference Resolutions

AIDS

Resolution offered by the Board of Elders and Passed Unanimously by General Conference XI

BE IT RESOLVED that the UFMCC, recognizing the interrelated nature of wellness of mind, body and spirit and the historic responsibility of the Church of Jesus Christ to pastor, educate and militate (where necessary) shall, as a body, respond to the AIDS crisis in a variety of ways:

1) PASTORAL CARE AND LEADERSHIP - This may be the area of greatest need and our greatest gifts. The UFMCC and its clergy and its congregations shall prepare ourselves to provide active pastoral care for persons with AIDS, and persons impacted by the AIDS crisis (significant persons in the life of the person with AIDS, and the helping persons involved). This care will be on a one to one basis and in the form of support groups. We know that it is God's will that NO person suffer alone and isolated. Further, we commit ourselves to address the urgent spiritual issues arising from illness and death - including unresolved guilt, fear, self-hatred and internalized homophobia.

   And further, we commit ourselves to be vigilant, outspoken opponents of any theology that even suggests that any disease is God's divine earthly retribution against any individual or group; and we resolve to preach, teach and proclaim God's loving, healing power and desire for our health and happiness.

   To this end, we ask that Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission consider part of its agenda to help us address the theological issues involved;
   and
   That the Spiritual Life and Clergy Care Program and its Chaplains become proficient in pastoral care in the AIDS crisis as a resource for us all.

2) EDUCATION - The UFMCC and its local churches will provide continuing accessible education regarding AIDS and other health-related issues in a sex-positive, Gay-positive and wellness-positive manner to members of the Fellowship, and the communities in which we live.

   To this end, we ask that Samaritan Education Ministries, in cooperation with the Fellowship Offices and publications, provide resources for such education.

   In addition, the Board of Elders will explore options for the efficient and reliable flow of accurate information regarding AIDS.

3) POLITICAL ACTIVISM - The UFMCC and its member churches will actively participate in educating elected officials on the local, regional and national levels regarding the AIDS crisis, including (but not limited to) monies for research, legal issues and avail-

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CONFERENCE CONFERENCE

u--p--d--a--t--e

In the middle of a Toronto heat wave, UFMCC celebrated its 11th General Conference, with over 700 registrants and hundreds of other attendees at worship services and on the weekends.

The Board of Elders (especially the Treasurer) is happy to report that the Conference at least broke even on expenses. Thanks for your cooperation in helping us do that. Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart retired at this Conference from the Board of Elders after 7 years of service. Many thanks to you, Charlie.

Rev. Elder Donald Eastman, of Dallas, Texas, is our new Elder. Rev. Elder Jeri Ann Harvey and Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson were re-elected, Harvey for a second term, Wilson for a third. The Elders re-elected these current officers: Moderator: Rev. Elder Troy Perry; Vice Moderator: Rev. Elder Freda Smith ; Treasurer: Elder Michael Mank; Clerk: Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Executive Secretary of World Church Extension: Rev. Elder Jean White. (The next Board of Elders meeting will be November 12-15, 1983 in Los Angeles, CA, following the Western Clergy Conference in San Diego, CA).

OTHER ACTIONS AT GENERAL CONFERENCE INCLUDED:

Election of Chair of the Commission on the Laity - Ms. Jackie Walker, Sojourner MCC, Ferndale, MI.
Assistant Chair - Mr. Larry Rodriguez, MCC, Los Angeles, CA.

Election of the Chair of the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee- Rev. Claudia Vierra, Boise, ID

Chair of Sub-Committee on Standards: Rev. Brenda Cisneros-Hunt, MCC Detroit, MI.

Chair of Sub-Committee on Concerns: Rev. Karen Ziegler, MCC New York.

Sub-Committee on Student Clergy - Rev. Ken Martin, MCC in the Valley, No. Hollywood, CA.

The Proposal for Fellowship Re-structuring (Articles V and VI, especially of the By-Laws) by the Commission on Government Structures and Systems, was referred back to the Commission for time for additional feedback and consideration by churches and Districts. The proposal will be considered for adoption at the 1985 General Conference in Sacramento, CA.

The Board of Elders was instructed to work with the Third World Ministry Department to implement the recommendations coming from the first Third World Gay and Lesbian Christian Conference. The recommendations call for more Third World representation at all levels of the Fellowship.

Several By-Law changes were passed including that a lay person may now be elected District Coordinator; more definition of requirements for Mission and Charter status; and clearer definitions about titheable income. In addition, initial license to the professional ministry of UFMCC shall be for one year only, and biennially after that first year.

A plan for a Board of Pensions and beginning assessment for a pension trust and the basic outline for an actual pension plan, were all passed by the General Conference.

This year, for the first time, a District-based, representative, Fellowship Finance Committee submitted the budget to General Conference. It was passed with minor amendments and includes funding for the Fellowship headquarters, publications, World Church Extension, Samaritan Education Ministries, Commission and Committee work.

It also included Financial procedures and the process for budget review over the next two years. There were major budget cuts in program and personnel, basically reflecting a more realistic 1983-85 budget.

The recommendation from the Commission on Government Structures and Systems for a method for seating Study Groups failed at this Conference. Throughout the Conference substitute motions were offered, but none passed. There was also considerable discussion about ob-

The news media interviewing Rev. Troy Perry at the General Conference in Toronto, Ontario.

servers, and who did or did not have a voice on the floor of General Conference.

14 resolutions were passed by the 11th General Conference, including statements supporting both unilateral and bilateral nuclear weapons freeze; and two resolutions on AIDS; other resolutions dealt with diverse issues such as tithing, Student Clergy, lay people consecrating communion, World Church Extension consciousness raising; and our thanks to out-going Samaritan Dean, Rev. Lucia Chappelle.

MCC AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES UPDATE

The National Council of Churches will have its Governing Board meeting in Hartford, CT, November 9, 10, 11, 1983. They are scheduled, at that time, to accept or not accept the report of the Constituent Membership Committee which states that it finds the UFMCC eligible for membership in the Council.

MCC AND AIDS

The Board of Elders offered a major resolution to the General Conference concerning AIDS.

If you are involved in a local or regional AIDS project, please let us know and the name of your project, address, phone, etc., your role and areas of expertise. We need this information as soon as possible. Send it to:

UFMCC "AIDS" ACTION
5300 Santa Monica Blvd., No. 304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Thank you for your cooperation.

WESTERN CLERGY CONFERENCE in North America will be held November 8-11, 1983 in San Diego, CA, using the new facilities of MCC San Diego. The program promises to be a full and exciting one, including Dr. James Nelson, author of EMBODIMENT. In addition, Sharon Tobin, a therapist and student of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, will be presenting an adjunct program on issues of death and dying, grief and loss, on November 7, the day before Clergy Conference begins. Registration information is forthcoming. Plan to attend and take advantage of these exciting resources. ■

Members of the Northeast District meet under a cool tree during the record breaking heat which visited Toronto the week of Conference.

worship

by Michael England
Pastor
MCC of San Francisco

Dennis Moore, newly ordained clergy sings during the Sunday morning worship service.

Paula's invitation to write about the General Conference worship services in Toronto was an interesting challenge. Then I began to have second thoughts. I've always structured my personal Conference experiences flexibly. It's a long, demanding week, so I schedule dinners with old friends or rest during those services which look as though they may be (*for me personally*) "dry" or "less nourishing." This year I *had* to miss three services and regreted even missing those! For the first time in the nine General Conferences I've attended, the worship for me was consistently vibrant, nourishing, challenging and inspiring.

Any worship is a two-way street, needing the participation of planners/leaders *and* of the congregation to be effective. The planning and leading this year were superb. Renee McCoy and Danny Ray, in a task I've often thought only the foolish or crazy would accept, offered us beautiful, rich worship. Whatever snags may have happened behind the scenes, they made it look easy. Renee's clear, earthy, no-nonsense communication with us solved conflicts, smoothed rough spots and facilitated our worship. Danny continued throughout the week to show his musical skill and versatility, and a delightful wit which surfaced now and then to move things along. There was very little this year of the tired old ego struggles which have musicians preaching sermonettes before every solo, masking poor preparation as the movement of the Spirit, and so forth. Instead, there was disciplined observance of the needs of worship and yet the flexibility to allow for special movements of the Spirit, which *did* happen all week long. There was the Washington, D.C. choir singing its gospel special with such joy that the congregation wouldn't let them go until they turned us on with two more. But they were only among the first of the wonderful musicians who thrilled us.

There was the healing service on Wednesday. After Jeri Ann Harvey's remarkable, risky sermon ("Preachers, do you ever ask laypeople to lay hands on you? Are you afraid they might have a gift you don't?" and, "We have gifts we're not willing to make fools of ourselves in Christ for," and, "Why does every beautiful man have to be a hunk? I've seen some *chunks* who were beautiful . . . Why do we do these things to each other?"), she called people forward to heal and to be healed. The aisles were flooded with folks, there were tears and quietness, soft singing, ushers ministering to healers with the cup of cold water, focus and energy, people healing and being healed in their own ways and their own styles. To me as a former Southern Baptist (there are few groups more staid and less emotional in their worship) it was beautiful and moving.

And in other sermons there were many golden moments: Nancy Wilson claiming already on Monday evening that factor which made all our worship, and the whole Conference, live, "Our hearts beat together and we know it's God's heart in us," and confronting the Moral Majority's theology of, "A graceless, sterile, violent, *mean* little God going, 'Nyah, nyah.' " Brent Hawkes telling us that, "God is waiting to lead us to new victories." Charlie Arehart's closely reasoned and stirring affirmation that it is *not* God's will that we suffer. Michael Mank speaking of the balanced tripod of spiritual life – prayer, study and action. And his fearless challenge, "To blame the pastor for lack of feeding is wrong . . . If a member of a church says, 'I'm not being fed,' it's an indictment of the member." Jean White telling us of the vast lack in our Fellowship of linguistic skills which are essential to sharing the Good News of Christ's liberation in non-English-speaking areas. George McDermott's challenge to "come as you are . . . and know that God will use you as you are." (Though the consecutive translation in Spanish and Danish, while it was pointed and useful, almost mortally wounded the progress of his thought.)

Freda, spirited and sparkling even under the dangerous and oppressive heat-

wave crushing the city, criticizing those who say we've stolen the word 'gay' for ourselves, and responding, "They've stolen some words from us, too; words like 'justice, 'mercy,' 'freedom.' But they can't take *The* Word away!" June Norris likening Jesus to the common denominator of many fractions, bringing together all of us many "strange numbers" above the lines. And Troy drawing us together on the final Sunday morning to recount, in the framework of the Hebrews litany of heroes of the faith, a litany of the faith of heroes of our denomination. (Unfortunately, I missed – and *heard* about from many folks – the sermons of Larry Rodriguez, Renee McCoy and David Farrell.)

It was a week of diverse devotional and musical offerings from the whole spectrum of our backgrounds, and from the eclectic fountain of our present unity. And this year I didn't hear the mutterings of "there's too much 'Pentecostal' stuff," or, "why do we have to have all these 'high church' things?" Everyone seemed to be open to the diverse ways God spoke to us. I have, especially, longed so much for some innovative and creative worship coming from our wealth of UFMCC talent. This year it was there. Expecially in the wonderful service FFO designed and gave us which, even competing with the terrible heat, was like a rich, varied dinner feeding us in a satisfying way.

I brought so *much* home this year. Michael McManus, our Minister of Christian Nurture, and I kept whispering to one another, "Let's get the music to that to do at home," and "Let's try this new idea in our worship." We were especially thrilled by the splendid new hymns, lots of them, which sing of our particular experience of God and our faith, and which do so with the beauty of inclusive images. (Only in a couple of musical presentations and a couple of spoken ones Thursday evening was inclusiveness much violated. For the most part in inclusiveness we were also finding our harmony, enhanced by the lovely and enthusiastically applauded guidance of Virginia Mollenkott on Thursday morning.)

The worship services were a central part of the special experience of "Many Gifts, One Spirit" this year which made me, like Peter, want to set up some tents and stay on the mountaintop. But then I couldn't have brought any of it home. And I've only hit a few high points. Those of you who were there are cherishing all your own golden moments. Those of you who weren't – plan now to be in Sacramento in 1985. ■

MCC people from all over the world meet together to talk before attending worship.

human rights rally

THE RIGHTS TOUCH
by Steve Warren
Lay Minister

"The parent of Canada's Gay movement," George R. Hislop, received UFMCC's third Human Rights Award at a rally on the semi-final day of General Conference XI in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Hislop was accompanied by and shared the credit with his spouse of 25 years, Ron Shearer, saying "No one works alone."

In 1971 Hislop founded CHAT (Community Homophile Association of Toronto), the city's first Gay organization, and initiated a dialogue with the police regarding their entrapment policies. In 1980 he ran for alderman from ward six as Toronto's first openly Gay candidate.

Among the issues he raised in his ultimately unsuccessful campaign was the police budget, which Hislop said should be cut. He believes the police raids on Gay bathhouses a few weeks after the election were "politically motivated" in retaliation for his stand.

On the current state of Gay rights in Canada, Hislop reported that Quebec is the only province which has Gay rights legislation on the books; a similar bill has been recommended for Ontario but has not passed yet; things look bad in British Columbia where a new right-wing government has just been elected.

Hislop attributed his courage to the words of a hymn he had sung as a boy: "Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone," and called on all Gay men and Lesbians to come out, "to define ourselves, not let other people tell us who and what we are."

Previous winners of the Fellowship's Human Rights Award are Midge Costanza (1979), special assistant to then President Jimmy Carter; and the Unitarian Universalist Church (1981), which has helped a number of MCC's get started by providing meeting space.

Only about 200 attended this year's

LEFT: During the Human Rights Rally, Sam Edelman shares her satiric sermon, "Can God Cure The Heterosexual?" ABOVE: Papa John, honored as Elder Emeritus, shares a story with two brothers.

Human Rights Rally. Some preferred to take advantage of Saturday afternoon for sightseeing and shopping; others wanted to avoid returning to Trinity St. Paul's United Church, which had been the site of increasingly sweltering worship services each night of the week.

Awards were presented to 17 churches and individuals for their contributions to the Fellowship.

MCC Toronto received an award for hosting the conference and their pastor, Rev. Brent Hawkes, got one for his fast on behalf of Gay rights. Rev. Bob Wolfe was given one of two "Founders Awards" for starting MCC Toronto ten years earlier; the other went to Rev. Jo McVay Abbott for his part in bringing MCC to Europe.

Recipients of "Stewardship Awards" were MCC Pomona Valley (CA) for World Church Extension fundraising, MCC Austin (TX) for their "Fifth Sunday" program, and MCC in the Valley (North Hollywood, CA) for their "Do Unto Others Fund." MCC Atlanta was honored "for facing persecution creatively" during a rash of vandalism. Rev. Sky Anderson, former pastor of MCC San Jose (CA), got an award for his "fast for the homeless."

Recognition was given for three new projects in the Fellowship, to Rev. Nancy Radclyffe for the Spiritual Life and Clergy Care Center; Rev. Jeff Pulling for new projects at Samaritan Education Center, especially a newsletter, "S.O.T.E.R.", and Rev. Renee McCoy for organizing the first Third World Gay and Lesbian Christian Conference.

The remaining citations were for church consolidation and rebirth – "Merger Awards" to All God's Children MCC of Minneapolis/St. Paul (MN) and New Life MCC of Tidewater/Norfolk (VA), and "Phoenix Awards" for reviving dormant works to Rev. Jamie McAllister for MCC Worcester (MA), Rev. Ron Bergeron for MCC Ottawa (Ontario, Canada) and Lawrence Bernier (author of "Our God Is Like An Eagle") for Good Shepherd MCC Riverside (CA).

Rev. John Hose (Papa John) was honored as Elder Emeritus, having served on the original board until 1981.

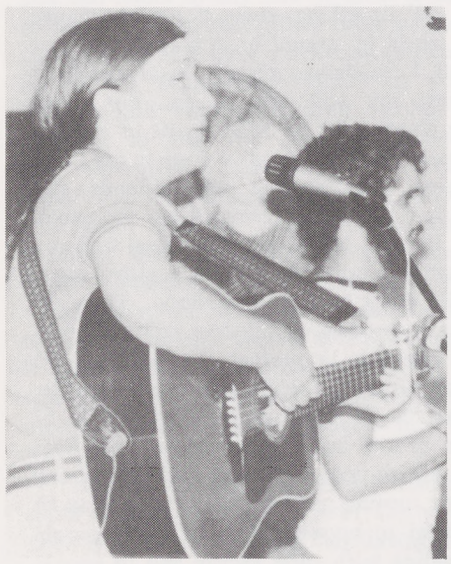
Making his now traditional visit to the rally was Steve Endean, executive director of the Gay Rights National Lobby, who brought good news on three fronts: the Lesbian/Gay Rights Bill has a record number (71) of co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives; news of major funding for AIDS research is about to break; and as the result of a sex scandal the U.S. House has its first openly and proudly Gay member, Rep. Gerry Studds (D-MA).

It wouldn't have been MCC if the event hadn't been punctuated with music and fun. Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, who served as emcee, led us in singing "Amazing Grace" for openers, and Bobbie Andrews of Sojourner MCC, Ferndale (MI) sang a solo at midpoint.

Rev. Sam Edelman preached on a subject close to all our hearts, "Can God Cure the Heterosexual?" It was a hilarious inversion of every homophobic diatribe we've ever heard, not missing a cliche, and so well delivered that Rev. June Norris, a notorious heterosexual, came forward for "healing" at the end. (Rumor has it she's backslid since).

The spirit of the day was captured in the closing song as we joined Carolyn Mobley of MCC Atlanta in singing:

"We are moving, we are moving
Toward a day of liberty
When we'll be singin',
we'll be shoutin'
Hallelujah, we are free!" ■



Bobbi Andrews, left, and Carolyn Mobley, above, share their music at the Human Rights Rally.

WE'RE NOT FULL OF HOT AIR..... WE'RE WOMYN IN NEED OF GREATER SHARING!

"Sometimes I feel so all alone out there." During the womyn's sharing time in Toronto last month at General Conference, it became apparent that many womyn within the UFMCC have felt this way at one time or another.

Our sharing led us to brainstorm for greater avenues of communication in between those times of treasured closeness, avenues that would open up the inroads for our JOURNEY together as womyn who follow Christ in a contemporary community. In our times together we cried and laughed and delighted in being together . . ."WINGS" will be the opportunity for us to continue together in wholeness, healing, sharing and greater lines of communication.

We could think of no better way to reach out and touch each other, than with the help of our already established *JOURNEY* MAGAZINE! We will plan to have articles, songs, ideas for feminist worship, listings of womyn's events across the world, opportunities to serve as womyn in ministry, thoughts or ideas for womyn to enrich one another, or something to give us all a good belly laugh. Just send all ideas or entries to:

JUDY DAHL
1235 S. IVANHOE WAY
DENVER, COLORADO 80224

and I'll see that we all hear the "Good News" of your greater sharing!

LOOK FORWARD NEXT MONTH FOR THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE!

"Good Grief! Me A Racist?"

by Nancy Wilson
Collective Writer

The notion that grief can be good was popularized in the 1970's, most notably through Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's best-selling book, *On Death and Dying*.

Kubler-Ross's thesis was that death is natural and so is grieving, and we need to allow those who are dying or who love someone who is dying to grieve naturally. Also, she offered the important observation that grieving (over death or any loss) seems to have a pattern, that is approximated in five stages: Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Her very important thesis has been applied to many circumstances. It applies not only to the process of grief, but to healing, coming out, or coping with any kind of changing consciousness – especially social and political consciousness.

Let's try it on.

For white people, coming to terms with racism is like (or is!) grieving. It means giving up some images of ourselves and some perceptions of the world. It means facing and embracing new reality and new demands. It is personally shattering and re-making. It is a lot like losing a lover, falling in love, coming out, becoming a feminist, leaving home for the first time.

DENIAL: NOT ME! I'm not a racist. Racists are in the KKK, in the Nazi party, talk with southern accents, or are Republicans. I treat everyone just the same. I really don't notice what color someone is. I have never discriminated against anyone. I contribute to liberal causes. I have a few friends who are Black (Hispanic, Native American or Asian). I don't need one more thing to cope with.

ANGER: WHY ME? Why do I have to deal with this? Can I help it if my ancestors were white racists and screwed things up for all of us today? Why do I have to be responsible for the racism of my forebears? Why are you all picking on me? Why are things so bad anyway? Whose fault is this? Why are people of color so angry? WHAT'S WRONG??

BARGAINING: NOT YET. Look. I'm just not ready. EVERYBODY CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO deal with everything, right? It's just not my thing. It's not the right time – there's too much else happening in my life. I'll buy a ticket to the people of color dance (though I probably won't go) . . . or go to a cultural event. Mostly, I just don't have time right now . . . .

DEPRESSION: WOE IS ME. Alright, alright. I'm beginning to see. And it is overwhelming. I hate what I see – in myself and others. It doesn't feel good to be white and guilty. I am a racist . . . and all my life I have denied it. And I feel awful. I feel like it is all my fault. And like nothing I do matters. How can one person change anything in this world? All that happens to fanatics is that they get killed or that everybody hates them. It feels so useless even to try to change or to fight for social change. I feel exhausted just knowing the truth about all of this. I feel alone and helpless and guilty.

ACCEPTANCE: You know, I'm starting to really understand. I can accept my own racism and still be a good person. I can do something –even if I can't change the world by myself or in a short time, or at all, I can change myself. I was socialized against my will into racism, but that's true about a lot of other facets of my life. Look at all the things I've done in my life – coming out, dealing with friends and family, being a Lesbian/Gay Christian.

If I can do all that, I can deal with my racism. In constructive and positive ways. And I don't have to do it alone. There are ways I can work on my own racism. And I don't have to be perfect. Or guilty. I can be proud of my white anti-racist heritage. I can be in community with people of color in new and healthy ways. I can hear the rage of people of color without turning off or turning on them or myself. I can be a friend to myself, to other white people struggling with their racism and to people of color struggling to survive and create a new world.

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Substance Abuse

THE BIG LIE

by Kurt Kreisler
Collective Member

"I've been getting too drunk lately, I think I'll switch to just beer and wine instead of the hard stuff!"

"I only get drunk on weekends. A person has to relax and unwind once in awhile!"

"You know, I can't remember a thing about the party last night! I must have been smashed!"

"I had too much to drink last night, I think I'd better stay home from work today. I don't feel so good!"

"I don't understand it. I woke up this morning and my bed was wet! I must have taken a drink to bed with me and spilled it!"

"Wow, did we party last night! But my hands are shaky this morning and I know one drink would fix me up!"

Any of these sound familiar? Well, if you can relate to any one of them (I used to relate to *all* of them) then there's a good chance you may have a drinking problem. Sound too frightening? Can't be you? What would you do without alcohol to turn to, to give you comfort, to make you relax after a hard day's work? How would you be able to go to bars or parties? You can't imagine yourself at a social function without a drink in your hand, right? Besides, a few drinks make you relax, lower your inhibitions, make it easier to relate to people (better able to cruise?). It makes you more creative, too, I'll bet. If you say "Nah . . . I couldn't have a drinking problem!" then you've bought into the BIG LIE.

Next you're going to tell me that you could quit anytime, aren't you? Oh, yeah? Then try this experiment: try having only one drink a day (or night) for a month. If you can do this successfully, then perhaps I was wrong about you. Maybe you don't have a problem. Remember the old commercial "Bet you can't eat just one?" Well, this is sort of the same principle. It sort of helps divide the "ares" from the "are nots." If you don't make it successfully, then go ahead and be alarmed! But don't feel hopeless, either! You can help yourself!

First of all remember that alcoholism is a disease, not a weak character or a lack of will power. It is all encompassing and involves your mind, your body and your spirit. The disease makes you an addict, a drug addict. Alcohol is a drug, didn't you know that? The problem is nothing to be ashamed of unless we ignore the obvious, adopt the problem, and keep on drinking anyway. There's no known cure for this disease at the present time. Even those of us who have quit drinking are still alcoholics . . . we're just 'recovering' alcoholics. We'll always have the disease. But it can be controlled, How? The answer is simple, the mechanics a little more difficult. You can quit drinking! Mull this over for a few moments while I fill you in on a few facts.

If you're reading this, there's a good chance that you're a member of the Lesbian/Gay Community. If you are, here are a few tender tidbits for you to savor. One out of seven heterosexual persons has a problem with alcohol. One out of *three* homosexual persons has a problem! That's a lot of people! The odds aren't very good. One consolation, though . . . if you do have a problem, you also have a lot of good company! And we share in one another's pain . . . but we also share in one another's struggle . . . and triumph!

So now you've decided that "maybe" you have a problem. Well . . . that's not good enough! We have to get you to a point where you *know* you have a problem. How can you tell, really, for certain? Well, one good rule of thumb is this: If alcohol, in any way, is giving you difficulties, of any sort, in your daily life, then chances are . . . you guessed it. Social drinkers do not have that problem. And remember the quotes at the beginning of this saga? How many did you relate to? Even one would be sufficient to point the finger of accusation at demon rum. And, come on now . . . haven't you, for a long time, felt somewhere way back in the dusty corners of your mind that you were in trouble?

Wouldn't it be nice not to wake up with hangovers every morning? How about the drunken arguments with your friends, your lover? Wouldn't it be a more pleasant way to live if you weren't so obsessively afraid to be too far away from the closest bottle, from the next drink, just to make it through the day, just to kill the pain that you can't describe? How about the shakes? Ever have those? Frequently feel as if your tongue is asleep and your teeth itch? Ever have the dry heaves in the morning? What a way to start the day! How about those blood shot eyeballs that stare back at you in the bathroom mirror every morning? Doesn't alcohol taste rotten first thing in the morning? Upchuck the first one and have to nurse the second one hoping it'll stay down? I'd say you had a problem. But then everything is relative. If you're satisfied living that way, then you haven't hit bottom yet. You haven't suffered enough. If you *are* sick and tired of being sick and tired then it's time for you to come home again. What's first? Take the first step. Remember the old adage, the trip of a thousand miles begins with but a single step? It's true. Now come on, take the first step with me, okay? Come on . . . it doesn't hurt a bit!

First, admit to yourself, in the privacy of your own room, that you have a problem. After all, if you can't trust yourself, who can you trust? This is the hardest part, by the way. You've denied it for so long that you believe the BIG LIE. Try just a little more . . . that's it! You did it! Now, find a friend, a pastor, a parent, a lover . . . anyone you have respect for. Now, what you just admitted to yourself, admit that same thing to them. This is the second step. It's easier than the first. Done that? Now . . . find a support group that can help you over the rough spots. Alcoholics Anonymous is a good place to start. There's also a Gay/Lesbian AA called Alcoholics Together (AT). Look it up in your phone book or call your nearest Lesbian/Gay organization. Find out where they're meeting and *go*! Don't be nervous or afraid. Believe me, you'll be welcomed and surrounded by love and acceptance. When you see all of those smiling faces, hear the laughter, you'll be overwhelmed by the fact that you all share the same problem . . . you can't tolerate alcohol. You'll get phone numbers of people you can call when you're having a rough time or even when you just feel like talking to

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ffo

by T. Michelle Carmody
Lay Representative
(reluctantly retired)
Western Canadian District

We began our pre-Conference meeting in the same way as almost any other conference meeting I've even seen in MCC; screaming, hugging, kissing and talking a mile a minute. All of this *really* started the day before the meeting with those of us who were blessed enough to be able to get to Toronto early, and continued into the second day of the meeting with those who came late. As has been said many times before, the greatest part of any conference or meeting in UFMCC is re-kindling old friendships and making new ones. However, we did get lots done besides that.

As we got down to work, we met our new members and each present district gave their report. Hearing all the happenings from across the Fellowship is always a great thrill for me and it adds to the excitement of the whole Commission.

Since November 83, when the Commission last met, approximately 450 people have participated in the Basics of the Christian Faith workshops: I "Spirituality and Sexuality;" II "Personal Faith Statements;" and III "Study Questions for a Christian Theology of Sexuality." When we add that to the 400 who participated before November, that's at least 850! We all praise God for the cooperation of the people who attended the workshops. Not everyone started out willing and enthusiastic, but, for the most part, after participating, the general consensus was that the workshops were at least pleasant and, for a great majority, were quite stimulating, informative and personally relevant.

Many districts reported that the participants were emotionally "high" afterwards, especially with Workshops I "Spirituality and Sexuality," and III "Study Questions."

It seems to have added to the intensity of people's experiences to realize that not only does your life count to you and God, but also your opinions, ideas and questions are important to the whole Fellowship. All of us need to realize that Theology is not reserved for the "elite learned ones" up in their ivory towers, where they come up with what we down below are supposed to believe without question. Rather, theology is what each one of us does daily when we make our life decisions based on our understanding of God and our personal faith. This is the basic philosophy behind the "grass roots" approach to form a Christian Theology of Sexuality, which is both the method and the task that you, as the General Conference, directed FFO to do.

In hearing all the districts' reports regarding Workshop II "Personal Faith Statements," the Commission realized and included in our report, that the general feeling around UFMCC is that we don't need a new or revised Statement of Faith at this time.

What we found that we do need, is to learn to speak each other's languages, especially in the areas of Faith and Sexuality. In that way we can talk to each other and begin to be able to *hear* each other without shouting. We then need to be able to take what we've learned about each other and especially what we learn about ourselves and incorporate it all into a new personal wholeness with God. Then we will see the truly alive Body of Christ manifest in UFMCC.

To that end, FFO is developing two more workshops to be given, in conjunction with Workshops I and III, over the next two years. The results of all four workshops should be, first of all, personal growth for the participants. One of the other goals as mentioned in our report to General Conference, (which I would like to encourage everyone to read), is forming representative study questions for the ongoing consideration of the entire Fellowship in order to know just what everyone thinks a Christian Theology of Sexuality is about.

ACTION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

There was a forum time during the week so that people could come and ask questions of the Commission to find out exactly what we've been doing or what our results are. There was a handful of attendees who were very supportive and interested.

Later in the Business sessions, as the entire 24 member Commission sat across the stage in front of the General Conference in order to be able to better facilitate questions and answers or debate, the Conference body shocked us all by passing

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our report and our three proposed resolutions without one dissenting voice!

EMBODIED WORSHIP

The last thing FFO did for Conference '83 was to plan and carry out a very special Worship service. Rev. Elder Freda Smith and the New Freedom Evangelistic Team shared their service with us, which worked out just fine, except for the weather (temperatures soared).

It was a service full of many beautiful moments which lose something in being written about rather than being experienced. Therefore, I'll only describe a bit.

After the Team finished their special music, we had a short singspiration. During the third song, which was "Every Time I Feel the Spirit," all the members of the Commission, both Lay and Clergy, some in vestments, some in "civvies," went down to stand in front of three tables whose tops were tipped up sideways on hinges, thus forming a dividing wall between the tables, which were to serve as altars ,and the people. As we began the next song, "Walls That Divide," Jimmy Kerber and the Conference Dance Choir began dancing, first in front of us and then between us breaking us apart and taking us back to our rightful places within the congregation. The dancers then celebrated the openness between the people and the Altar of God and at the last "Walls that divide are broken down, Christ is our unity," they pushed the table tops down with a loud bang, effectively showing that there are no barriers between God and humanity except the ones we build ourselves. There was a collective gasp from the congregation as that fact hit home and then spontaneous applause. As I said, it was a very special service.

It was an incredibly busy, productive and meaningful Conference, both for myself and for the Faith, Fellowship and Order Commission. In order to lessen the burden on the Chair, we decided to form an Executive Committee. The members are: Jenny Boyd Bull, chair; Clarence Crossman, Eastern Canadian District; B.J. Couvion, Mid-Central District, and Betty Pedersen, Northwest District.

The Commission will next be meeting in the Spring of 1984 at the Eastern Clergy Conference. Members will be writing papers to bring to that meeting to focus on analyzing how we in MCC "do Theology." Members of FFO will also be continuing to submit articles to *JOURNEY* over the next two years.

We all thank everyone who has made our work easier and given us support: Clergy, Laity, District Coordinators and Elders alike. We trust your support will continue over the next two years and wish to remind you that each member of the commission depends on the individual Districts for their funding to Conferences. See you in Sacramento in 1985! ▪

REPRESENTATIVE GERRY STUDDS COMES OUT AS GAY ON HOUSE FLOOR

by Stephen R. Endean

WASHINGTON, DC – Representative Gerry Studds (D-MA) became the first Member of Congress to openly declare that he is Gay on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. In a statement in response to charges by an ethics committee that he had sex with a House page, Representative Studds stated, "All Members of Congress must cope with the challenge of initiating and maintaining a career in public office without destroying entirely the ability to lead a meaningful and emotionally fulfilling private life. It is not a simple task for any of us to meet adequately the obligations of either public or private life, let alone both. But these challenges are made substantially more complex when one is, as am I, both an elected public official and Gay."

While a number of male Members of Congress have admitted having sex with other males under a variety of circumstances, their admissions have been accompanied by explanations of alcoholism or other drug use and none has gone farther than to 'admit' to 'homosexual tendencies.' What makes Representative Studds' declaration fundamentally important is that he not only did not try to explain his behavior as influenced by drugs, he made an open and unambiguous statement on the floor of the House that he is Gay. ▪

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Now, this may sound hokey. But if you heard yourself in any of those stages, it was worth it to risk being hokey. If you are a white person finding yourself feeling alone and wanting to talk about your struggles, please write the Fellowship offices and find out about our network of white people against racism. ▪

FFO's PROCESS AND FUTURE PLANNING

At crucial times in Christian history, the Holy Spirit has worked through perceived conflict in our faith lives to bring wholeness and healing to a people. Examples of this are the Protestant Reformation, the Great Wesleyan Revivals of the 1700's, the ordination of women, and the founding of MCC in 1968. Similarly, the Holy Spirit worked through conflicts and concerns at General Conference in 1981 to mandate that FFO engage in grassroots research and anlysis of issues in our Faith Statement, and in the development of study questions towards a Christian theology of sexuality.

The FFO has begun an exciting journey in fulfillment of the mandate. As a community of faith, we have taken our first steps in this journey; crucial steps as we move forward into previously unexplored territory for this Fellowship and the whole of Christianity.

Confirming signposts have been placed along the way: The excitement of our districts as they participated in our grassroots effort, the commitment of people involved in the work, and the enthusiasm of the National Council of Churches for our work and our process toward a Christian theology of sexuality.

PLANS FOR CONTINUING THE PROCESS

Along with the continuation of the formation of study questions in Workshop III, future workshops are being developed in the areas of vocabularies of faith and sexuality along with a prayer exercise geared to the uniting of our whole selves with God.

Our next meeting in May, 1984 will focus on the formation of study questions for a Christian Theology of Sexuality and will explore how we are doing theology as a Fellowship in this process.

AIDS
An evolving understanding

Editor's Note: Special thanks to BASIC, newsletter of MCC of the Blessed Redeemer in Atlanta, GA, for this article on AIDS.

I must preface this article by mentioning that the disease entity now called AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is a newly discovered disorder with research only beginning. Therefore, the disease is especially prone to much rumor, misunderstanding, and changing theories on its makeup and treatment.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome remains a poorly understood disorder. With the disease, part of the body's immune system is damaged in varying degrees of severity. The immune system is the body's natural way of recognizing and fighting off invading organisms. As a result of a damaged natural immunity, some victims of AIDS are more vulnerable than others to certain other diseases. The two most frequently reported of these diseases are Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), an otherwise rare form of cancer, and pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP, a protozoan infection of the lungs not ordinarily seen in immunologically healthy persons. Other infections have also been reported as a consequence of AIDS.

The exact cause(s) of AIDS are not yet known, but theories abound. Many health experts currently believe that AIDS is caused either by an infectious agent - probably a virus, by repeated infections with this agent, or by many exposures to several such agents. Recently, some research has suggested that there is an auto-immune component to the disease in which the body reacts against itself as if it were foreign, similar to the disease Lupus. While observers remain divided in their opinions about the exact cause(s) of AIDS, virtually all of them agree that AIDS is to some degree contagious. Most believe it can be transmitted sexually but not through social contact alone. Medical experts to date have dismissed reports that AIDS might be transmitted through routine household contact.

The first documented case of AIDS was reported in June 1981, and since that time over 1400 cases have been reported. The number of individual cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) six months ago occured at the rate of one per day. We are now told that four to six new cases are reported every day. Confirmed AIDS cases are still concentrated in New York (50%) and California (20%), but the disease has now appeared in 33 states and 16 foreign countries. Most cases are reported in males between the ages of 25 and 40. Several cases affecting women and children have been reported in the last year.

There are four main populations afflicted by AIDS: homosexual and bisexual men (70%); Haitians; intravenous drug abusers; and hemophiliacs or other individuals who receive large quantities of blood or blood products. It is important to remember, though, that AIDS is beginning to appear more frequently in other areas of the country as well as in different segments of the population than those previously reported.

Other possible or interrelated risk factors for AIDS have been said to include: (1) a history of chronic, recurrent, or multiple communicable diseases such as hepatitis, herpes, gonnorhea, syphilis, amoebiasis (intestinal parasites) as well as infections with cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV); (2) a genetic predisposition to the disease; (3) a background of malnutrition; (4) the use of certain recreational drugs; and (5) sexual practices which involve the repeated ingestion of or exposure of the body's moist mucous membranes to urine, feces, and/or sperm. Persons in any of these categories should be especially aware of AIDS and its symptoms.

Any conditions which compromise the body's immune system or a lack of adequate rest/health may also be contributing risks for AIDS. Several studies suggest that many sexually active (i.e. multiple partners) Gay men, especially those in urban centers with large Gay communities, may already have some degree of immune dysfunction and may be at greater risk to contract the developing complications of AIDS. The preceding are theorized risks at present; further research will be necessary before final conclusions can be made.

Now to an integral part of this article - the symptoms of AIDS you can watch for. In its mildest forms, an immune deficiency, is not accompanied by specific disease symptoms and may go entirely unnoticed. In more severe forms, the symptoms are those of a number of diseases a person can contact when immunilogically deficient or comprised. Generally speaking, AIDS symptoms include fever, weight loss, extreme fatigue, and enlargement of the lymph nodes. The specific symptoms are as follows:

(1) SWOLLEN GLANDS - These are enlarged lymph nodes, with or without pain, usually in the neck, armpits or groin.

(2) PINK TO PURPLISH FLAT OR RAISED SKIN BLOTCHES OR BUMPS - without pain, on or under the skin, inside the mouth, nose, eyelids, rectum. They usually appear small but get larger. They may look like a bruise that doesn't go away. Usually they are harder than the skin around them.

(3) WEIGHT LOSS - unexpected, and greater than 10 pounds in less than 2 months.

(4) PERSISTENT FEVER - that has lasted for more than a week.

(5) NIGHT SWEATS - periods of waking up drenched or sweaty.

(6) COUGH - persistent, often dry cough that is not from smoking and has lasted too long to be from a cold or the flu.

(7) DIARRHEA - persistent and not explained by other causes.

(8) PROFOUND FATIGUE - that is not explained by physical activity or by a psychiatric substance-abuse disorder that may be accompanied by light-headedness or headache that is not transient.

(9) EASY BRUISABILITY OR UNEXPLAINED BLEEDING - from any orifice or from new growths on the skin or on the mucous membranes.

The above are just general symptoms; however, if one or more of these symptoms persists for greater than one week, there may be cause for concern. Be sure to go to a doctor who is knowledgeable about AIDS and let the doctor know that you are Gay. If the doctor is not familiar with AIDS or not sympathetic, *get another doctor!*

There are not guaranteed treatments at the present time for the varying degrees of immune deficiency that are found with

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AIDS. There are, however, treatments for the individual episodes of infections that accompany the disease.

Prevention of AIDS may be enhanced by several factors. *Experts agree the most important step you can take to lessen your risk is to limit the number of different partners with whom you have sex.* Current evidence does point to a possibly contagious virus that can be transmitted sexually. It is the increasing number of different sexual partners, not sex itself, that apparently greatly increases the risks of developing AIDS. In addition, avoid having sex with persons who have symptoms of AIDS or other unexplained illnesses. If you know or suspect that you have a disease you could give to someone else, don't risk the health of others by having sex; wait until your doctor tells you it's safe.

As a result of the *"AIDS Crisis,"* feelings of guilt, sin, fear and even panic are often found. These reactions are not warranted and basically are a waste of valuable energy which could be better utilized. Like heterosexual women and men who are sexually active with many different partners, many Gay men are having to face a health risk which is increasingly associated with their sexual or life-style preferences. In the interest of public health, it is important that you know what those risks are and what you can do to minimize the.

Another very important factor for AIDS is the human one. Persons who have contracted the disease should not face discrimination or harassment for this poorly understood disorder. They are people, just like everyone else, and they should be treated fairly, not scorned, pitied, or ostracized. With your support for them and continued medical research, AIDS will be better understood.

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third world ministries

CAN UFMCC MEET THE CHALLENGE?

by Pat A. Evans
Student Clergy

My pastor, Rev. Robert Copestake, San Jose MCC, returned from General Conference XI very excited, uplifted and wanting to share many events of the Conference. One thing he shared with me was a tape of the message delivered by Rev. Renee McCoy, Harlem MCC.

I listened to this tape many times, each time hearing Rev. McCoy challenge every member, friend and supporter of UFMCC. She challenged UFMCC to give its Third World members some of the tools necessary to reach outside and minister to the needs of other Third World sisters and brothers. She challenged Third World members to share the message of liberation and hope given to us by UFMCC with sisters and brothers who have not yet heard these words. She challenged all of us in UFMCC to open our eyes, ears and hearts so that we would understand and allow Isaiah's vision of God's glory to be alive for us today.

I would like to thank Rev. McCoy for her message. I have seldom experienced anyone's taking such a risk in such a powerful manner. Yes, it is a risk for a Black person to stand in front of a predominantly white audience and challenge the listeners to reach out to People of Color in response to God's call. It is also risky for the oppressed to stand in front of the oppressor and ask for help. I think we all know by now that we must risk in order to change systems. I thank Rev. McCoy for taking this risk. I thank God for giving her the strength to deliver this powerful message of hope.

I would like to take this opportunity to echo McCoy's challenge and to affirm the importance of her words. Based on past experiences, I am afraid that Third World ministries may be forgotten or become less valid for some of us. My experience of the first Lesbian and Gay Third World Christian Conference sponsored by UFMCC in October 1982 serves as an excellent example of the bases of my fear.

I was very proud to belong to the Fellowship that was sponsoring this historic event and proud that I was participating in the making of this history. But when I arrived in Washington, D.C., I became frustrated at the disorganization of the Conference. This disorganization was caused mostly by a lack of funds. Somehow, the money that had been approved by UFMCC on paper never reached the Conference staff. Without those funds, many resources, such as adequate housing and speakers, were never secured. In addition, I was saddened by the fact that only one non-Third World person actively participated in this Conference. I began to believe that this event was not important to anyone but us (a handful of People of Color - plus one).

However, when I arrived home, I had a large smile in my heart; and many people told me that my eyes glowed whenever I talked about the Conference. This smile and glow were due to the fact that before the Conference:

1. I didn't know that there were 50+ people of color related to UFMCC.
2. I didn't know that UFMCC had any Third World clergy.
3. I didn't know that Third World Lesbian and Gay Christians were coming out of their closets.
4. I had never before had C-H-U-R-C-H with Third World Lesbians and Gays.

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men's sharing

by Jimmy Kerber
Lay Minister

A little over a year ago a Feminist friend gave me a book to read and told me that the true test of our friendship would be reading that book in its entirety.

The book was Mary Daly's *GYN/ECOLOGY*, and dealt with the atrocities that men have perpetrated on women – not just good old American Oppression like job discrimination, but such horrors as Chinese footbinding, Indian wife burning and African clitorectomy. The book upset me a lot and drove home a message that men were awful and the only woman of any value (to the author) was a Lesbian.

I tried to find someone who had read the book to see if I was overreacting to it but the only person I could find told me she'd thrown the book across the room halfway through it and never finished it. I couldn't go back to the person who suggested I read it because I was still processing my feelings about the book.

I think that was the first time I ever felt a strong need to share my feelings with a group of men. I felt a lot of conflict at the time between loving men, being a Gay male, and only being able to communicate on an emotional level with my Lesbian sisters.

I lived through that and then this past Spring attended a workshop at the Northwest District Conference called "The Politics of Separation," led by the Rev. Karen Ziegler. In her workshop Karen talked about how we, as the body of Christ, become more whole by separating into same sex groups and healing ourselves and then bringing that wholeness back to the entire group for a stronger, healthier body. I felt a strong pulling toward communicating with other men and was excited about the idea of starting a men's group in the East Bay Area.

When I noticed in the schedule that General Conference XI would have a men's sharing time in Toronto I was elated and couldn't wait for Friday to come.

We gathered together on the morning of July 15, a truly international group – from the U.S., Canada and Australia. After checking in we began discussing the different ways men and women react in group situations. The consensus was that men tended to gather around specific interest areas in their same sex gatherings (such as Ski Clubs, Motorcycle Clubs, etc.), almost as if an excuse were needed to bond together. Women on the other hand, seemed to feel more comfortable gathering for mutual support without feeling the need of a topic of specialized interest. We wondered if men were afraid to admit that they needed each other.

We talked a lot about support and friendship and the way that sexual tension sometimes keeps us from seeking support from our own sex. For this reason many of us had always reached to women for support and ignored our brothers. On the other hand, a few felt their closest friend was a straight brother, again perhaps because of lack of sexual tension. Yet we all felt that an intimate closeness was necessary to our identity as Gay men.

We all wondered what kept us from reaching out to each other and felt it had a lot to do with the games men play in our community, especially the bars where "the hunt, the chase and the kill" adventure is the norm and developing meaningful relationships or friendships is not accepted practice. And yet at the same time none of us wanted to give up sexual freedom since it was something we'd fought for for a long time.

We felt that it was necessary for men to stop worrying about sexual tension and work at communication. If one feels an attraction for another it's there and human and okay. We also felt we shouldn't let sex rule our lives and got in touch with some anger about our sisters trying to make ethical decisions for us. Most of the men we knew were fairly promiscuous and yet most of the women we knew had to buy a bed together before they'd sleep in it. We may not always want one night stands and anonymous sex and we may prefer long-term encounters, but we felt it was our right to choose for ourselves and that our sisters had no right to criticize our choice.

Discussion of sexual freedom naturally led to the subject of AIDS. This disease frightens us and threatens not only our sexual freedom, but our very lives.

As the horror of AIDS hovers over us, we all feel the need to learn how to be compassionate and nurturing to our brothers, to talk to each other and get to know the individual behind the body.

One sharing session was not enough for us and we would have liked to have had more throughout the week of General Conference and see men's groups start up in our churches.

In another room a few hours later the General Conference passed a resolution from the Elders calling us to minister in our communities during the AIDS crisis. Perhaps men's sharing is one way to begin . . . . ■

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When I returned home, I didn't know how to report to San Jose MCC's Board of Directors, who had approved and raised the funds to send me to the Conference. I prepared a report, an overview of the workshops; but there was no way for me to report the spiritual or emotional experience.

I know that UFMCC will sponsor another Third World Christian Conference. I believe that UFMCC will allow this wheel of change to move. I pray that Third World sisters and brothers will continue the work begun in Washington, D.C. I pray that non-Third World sisters and brothers will pick up this wheel of change on the other side of the river bank. As Rev. James Tinney told those in attendance at the Conference, " . . . the only way to build a bridge is to work from both sides of the river."

Rev. McCoy is right; there is plenty for everyone to do. We cannot all have the same job, for many talents and gifts are needed to build this bridge to a foreign land. The 50+ who attended the Conference have begun to prepare the soil. If you will join us, if you will support us, together we can continue to prepare the ground. Once we are all united on one side of the river bank, we can work together to plant the seed. Then we all will see the product - maybe "a hundredfold." ■

women's sharing

WOMYN TOGETHER
by Lyn Perry

As is historically the case, General Conference was a time of frantic reunions, hectic schedules and a menagerie of sometimes torn emotions. In view of that kind of environment, the Women's Sharing Space each evening became, for many of us, a necessary harbor of quiet nurturing and loving support.

It was a time to be safe within the bonds of sisterhood and re-energize ourselves from one another's spirits. For many, it was a time to reaffirm the dynamic power that can be developed in an atmosphere of reciprocal caring and sharing among women.

The group began sharing on Monday evening, discussing how individual churches around the Fellowship are developing programs that specifically address our needs as women. The excitement seemed to intensify as we realized that that awareness has begun maturing into some very specific and powerful ministries. It was exhilerating to realize that within the process of developing a theological language that touches us as women, we have discovered a culture and a spirituality that is uniquely ours also.

There was a sense of strong affirmation in realizing we no longer have to be guilty about our need for a separate Women's space; nor does it require any kind of permission from others to develop positive networks exclusively with and for women. The evenings of sharing continued throughout the week in song and dance and prayer and growth. As with any process in our journey that involves self-growth, there were moments of unspoken pain, outrageous anger, and subtle hurt. More often than not, the group opened to these emotions (emotions that can so often seem frightening and overpowering) and the sense of healing and support became the reward as we learned to risk with one another.

The Conference theme of "Diversity" was overwhelmingly prevalent within the women of this Fellowship. Issues of spirituality, sexuality, sexism, agism and racism took different priorities for each of us. However, our bonding as sisters who have need for each other, allowed us not only to share, but also to hear one another's concerns.

The passion of women's spirituality is perhaps one of the most intense dynamics shaping the direction of our Fellowship at this time. Because of that fact, it seems immensely important that women covenant together that God's Spirit would be primary in our vision and that same Spirit would bring us to one accord within our diversity.

ABOVE: Jennie Boyd Bull, Sherre Boothman and Marianne VanFossen enjoying the company of each other. RIGHT: Candace Naisbitt and Lyn Perry take some quiet time together.

mollenkott

by Betty Pederson
Pastor

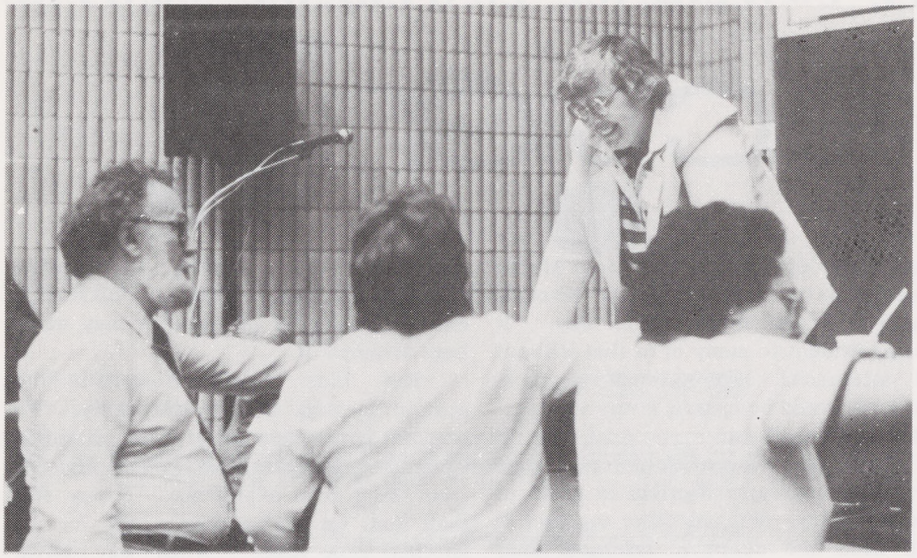
After hours of air conditioned business meetings and a seeming eternity of sweltering worship and sharing, I was surprised at the safe yet high energy space created by Dr. Virginia Mollenkott during her seminar. From her initial exclamation, "You are my family!" through her openness to questions and dialogue Dr. Mollenkott modeled for me the love and strength and mutuality that she later characterized as our legacy from a feminine imaging of God. In her opening remarks Dr. Mollenkott shared with us her view that the conscience of the National Council of Churches is really being worked on as they grapple with the reality that excluding MCC or any other group from the ecumenical Christian family excludes the Council from grace.

Dr. Mollenkott spoke with us about the difficulty that we have as Christians trying to understand that in relating to each other and to God, mutuality in relating is a law of spiritual health. This is an especially difficult concept for Christians who have been brought up to view the human heart as corrupt at its core, so that to praise the creature is in some way to denigrate the creator. Mutuality implies that God should submit to humans as humans submit to God. Genesis 1:26-28 was discussed pointing out that in granting human freedom God chose to limit God's self so that God's intervention in the world must come through the actions of human kind. We are speaking about a divine/human inter-indebtedness wherein God depends upon us for embodiment in this world. Viewing concentration camps from this perspective we find God dying with the victims, and freeing with the liberators. Mutuality also leads us to an understanding of our human inter-indebtedness encompassing all people with whom we share life on this earth.

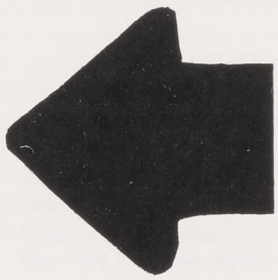
Sexism presents itself to us as the first form of alienation/sin mentioned in the Bible as a result of "the fall." As a result of this alienation and the consequent subjugation of women, who were intimately tied to images of the earth, female and earth images of God have been ignored. Only as women and minorities have fought for their rights have we begun to experience the fullness of the Biblical images of God. It becomes less easy for us to engage in the rape of the earth, when, as we look at the earth we see God. Through female images of God we are struck by the nearness of God, and are shown how power can be exercised in an intimate, warm and loving manner. Female images also bring home to us the righteous anger of God as in Hosea 13:8 where God is portrayed as an angry mother bear robbed of her cubs.

In speaking of the Spirit we note that in Hebrew we are dealing with a feminine word and in Greek with a neuter word so that we are hard put to deal with the Spirit

Virginia Mollenkott. Thank you for sharing with us at General Conference and for all the important work you do. We are grateful.



Virginia Mollekott talks to several MCC people about inclusive language and imaging God as female.



in masculine terms. The nature of Jesus is more fully revealed to us if we note that he is characterized as the wisdom of God (I Cor 1:24) very definitely a feminine concept. The work of redemption on the cross gains added layers of meaning as we recall Jesus' statement in John 17:1 (the hour has come) in the context of John 16:21: "When a woman is in travail she has sorrows because her hour has come, but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for the joy that a child is born into the world."

As women and minority groups begin to be empowered by the reflection of their experience in divine imagery we are much more able to understand that servanthood can be chosen as a way of life by us, rather than experiencing servanthood as the necessary result of our weakness and inability to choose any other way of life. The idea of inclusive language is not to drop male images of God, but rather to begin to use the diversity of images of God that are available to us. When singing "Our God is Like an Eagle" we can begin to experience the personally liberating power of freeing God imagery from our very limiting sex role catagories. As oppressed people beginning to experience ourselves in the image of God we also begin to realize that God is calling us to become mature and powerful embodiments of the divine nature active in this world.

The dialogue session with all of us was open and fast moving and all that I can do is to record comments at random that made an impression on me.

– It is liberating to realize that God empowers us and that we embody God.

– Dr. Mollenkott responded to a question about the use of Goddess to add to God imagery by saying that she considered the term God to be a job description rather than a male designation. An interesting discussion followed making the point that many people hear the term God as a male term.

– Living in mutuality includes learning to accept and live with all parts of who we are as individuals.

– Christ is not Jesus' last name. (While writing this the idea of job description made a great deal of sense in this instance also.)

– In dealing with God we are dealing with pan-in-theism: God is present in every being but is not limited to that.

– To consider Jesus as a star is often a way for us to opt out of responsibility as we trick ourselves into thinking that Jesus is too special to be a role model.

– It may be that homophobic men are very uncomfortable with a God that is exclusively male so churches use more inclusive language men may become more involved in church.

– Hermeneutics is the field in which we make clear our presuppositions and the rules we use when we interpret some type of human expression. As we try to understand the Bible as literature we must follow certain rules. All that we read must be considered in the total context within which it was written.

– We must consider the flow of grammar. What I am reading flows out of what I just read. In dealing with the Bible we need to remember that the chapter divisions are a later division and are not divinely inspired. The themes of idolatry and judgment in Romans 1 become more clear as we read them in the context of chapter 2. As we read about the submission of women in Ephesians 5 we need to be clear that these statements are within the context of a discussion of mutual submission. As a social change activist Paul is proposing the move to mutuality in relationships by the use of carefully chosen examples that can be heard in the culture he is dealing with.

– We must include an understanding of the literary format of any text that we are attempting to understand in the Bible. Are we dealing with a letter, with literal history, or with symbolic history. If we consider the creation stories as symbolic history it will be clear to us why a heterosexual couple is used to deal with populating the earth. When an analogy is used we must be clear about what is being compared, and we must understand that the context governs the interpretation of the analogy. For example when we read the Pauline texts saying that the husband is to the wife as Christ is to the church we receive a very different interpretation if we are viewing this analogy from the perspective of Christ as servant. From this perspective Paul is calling upon men to lay aside their special privileges and power as Christ did to become the servant of all.

– All scripture must be understood within its historical context. How was the writer socialized? What was happening historically during the writing of the text? What did the words mean to the writer and to later translators? When we realize that when the King James version of the Bible was written effeminate meant self-indulgent and the statement that the effeminate

continued on page 30

reflections

Diversity and Pluralism in Action

by Ro Halford
Pastor

General Conference XI in Toronto, Ontario, Canada was much like any other UFMCC General Conference. We had Business Meetings, Workshops, and Worship Services just like we always do at a General Conference, however, in the final analysis this Conference was different from any before.

For some of us, outside Canada, this difference began taking place when crossing the border into Canada. We were in a foreign land! Some people were searched because something on their persons set off the metal-detecting device beeper. It was the first time in their lives, perhaps, where they found themselves so vulnerable, (I can only speculate that).

ference began shaping its effect on our lives somewhere between Monday, July 11, and Sunday July 17. At the outset of Business, it appeared that we would never change, in fact, it appeared downright frustrating because we couldn't seem to get beyond our personal agendas.

Somewhere, in the process of "business as usual," there were changes being made. Changes which began affecting us in almost subtle ways. There were the outcries of emotions from some who didn't understand why others felt misunderstood. There were quiet assurances for those who felt angry about being misrepresented and misunderstood, that things were beginning to change. There were the painful outbursts of discontent for a Fellowship which outwardly professes the Love of God for ALL people, while practising exclusion and/or indifference toward Third-World peoples, the Hispanic Americas and Women.

Rev. Renee McCoy, in her presentation of the Third-World Ministries report, and after some painful exchanges of emotion, made it very clear to all of us that Third-World people are not going away. In essence, we were challenged to go with them, or be left behind. Rev. Jose Mojica represented the concerns of the Hispanic Americas in much the same way. It became evident to many of us that without full inter-racial, inter-national representation we would be missing a very vital part of the Body of Christ.

Curing the week of Conference, some of the women came together in times of special sharing. Women came together in their need and desire to celebrate their womanhood.

The Third-World Ministries, Hispanic Americas and Separatist Woman have risked sharing with this Fellowship the pain of their experiences, and we have, and can, continue to learn a great deal from them. Our link together as a Fellowship is the Body of Christ in the fullest sense of the word. We are bonded together by our diversity. It is the diversity of our Fellowship which brings us to grips with who we really are.

We are in a new age of growth and understanding in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. When the term "Universal" was applied to our denominational name, it was perhaps the desire to be truly UNIVERSAL, yet, one cannot help wonder how little we knew the meaning of that word, until now.

Universal implies a good many things. It implies "we are everywhere," it implies we are desireous of total inclusion into the Church, and it implies we open our doors and our hearts to ALL people from every walk of life. However, until now, we have never been so overwhelmingly confronted with being the UNIVERSAL Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. This Fellowship is being told in many ways, "Put up, or Shut up."

General Conference XI brought us to a place in our development as a Fellowship Body, and as individuals in where there is no turning back -- unless we turn our backs on God's Vision for us. We can no longer patronize one another. This Fellowship can no longer presume to act and speak for all people without complete integration of our diverse and pluralistic peoples. Universalism (Ecumenism), is being tested and tried as never before. We, who comprise the UFMCC are witnessing, experiencing and sharing the miracle of God's ALL encompassing love in ways we may never have dreamed of.

Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, in her sermon message said so eloquently, "We are an embarrassment to the National Council of Churches." We are so different from their own experience. Nancy also said that we are a special gift to one another from God. When Rev. David Farrell preached, the house almost came down with laughter when he said, "Sometimes *I* may even be wrong," and when David went on to say the women's movement in our Fellowship made a difference, this writer knew some changes were taking place.

As is usually the case, the preachers of General Conference XI were no exception in their eloquence and thought provoking messages. This General Conference was no exception in the depth of emotionalism, and differing views, yet, there was a deeper compassion toward one anothers' pain, and a deeper sense of understanding amidst all our differences.

General Conference XI will long be remembered in the hearts and minds of many, because we truly are the "Church Universal." It struck some of us very subtly, and others of us like a two-by-four board over the head; we are truly the "Church Alive" in this world today. That's what made this General Conference so different, because we are seeing it probably for the first time in our history, and we are a very important part of *Diversity* and *Pluralism* in *Action*. We are, after all, the *UNIVERSAL* FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES!!

■

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O YOUNG AND FEARLESS PROPHET

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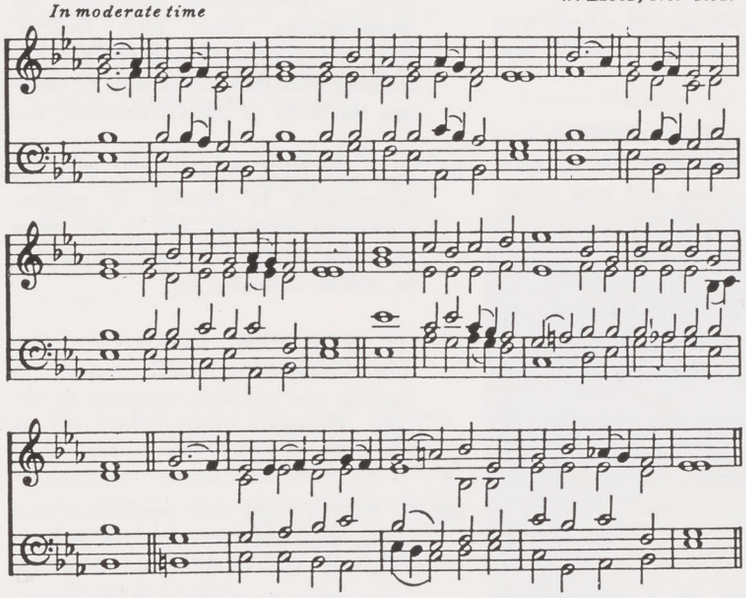
In moderate time

Later form of melody by W. LLOYD, 1785–1852.



1 O young and fearless Prophet
Of ancient Galilee:
Thy life is still a summons
To serve humanity,
To make our thoughts and actions
Less prone to please the crowd,
To stand with humble courage
For truth with hearts uncowed.

2 We marvel at the purpose
That held Thee to Thy course
While ever on the hilltop
Before Thee loomed the cross;
Thy steadfast face set forward
Where love and duty shone,
While we betray so quickly
And leave Thee there alone.

3 O help us stand unswerving
Against war's bloody way,
Where hate and lust and falsehood
Hold back Christ's holy sway;
Forbid false love of country,
That blinds us to Your call
Who lifts above the nation
The neighborhood of all.

4 Create in us the splendor
That dawns when hearts are kind,
That knows not race nor station
As bound'ries of the mind;
That learns to value beauty,
In heart, or brain, or soul,
And longs to bind God's children
Into one perfect whole.

5 Stir up in us a protest,
Against unearn-ed wealth;
For some go starved and hungry
Who plead for work and health.
Once more give us Thy challenge
Above our n oisy day,
And come to lead us forward
Along God's holy way. Amen.

O YOUNG AND FEARLESS PROPHET

by Jim Mitulski
Chair, Committee on Church Music

This hymn celebrates the life and ministry of Jesus, and calls us to live as Jesus did. Its history as a hymn illustrates one of hymnology's (the study of hymns) first principles: hymns tell us as much about our own lives as they do about our religious beliefs. By examining the history of this hymn, we can see the process a text undergoes as denominations edit it to conform to both their religious and political beliefs.

The Rev. Ralph Harlow, a clergy in the Congregational Church, wrote this hymn in 1931, during the height of a serious economic depression in the United States. Harlow was vacationing with his family when inspired to write the text; the first draft was written on the back of a menu in a diner in Pittsfield, MA. The Harlows were wealthy enough to afford a vacation at a time when many were unable even to find work. An incident from this trip particularly impressed him. While driving, he passed a hitchhiker, whom he describes as "poorly dressed, and looking very tired." Harlow continues the acoount:

> *He was most grateful and told us he had walked from Boston to Albany and out to Rochester looking for work and finding none. He said, "Just as you passed by I felt I was at the end of my rope. Last night I sold my razor to buy food. I was sitting there washing my feet which are blistered by much walking when you called. Somehow when you think you are utterly forgotten, God shows you that you are not as forgotten as you think you are."*

Harlow associated this encounter with the final stanza, which begins "Stir up in us a protest against unearned wealth . . ."

Interestingly enough, that verse has appeared only in the *Quaker Hymnal* (1956). Every other denomination has omitted it when printing the remainder of the hymn. The chair of the committee which published the *Methodist Hymnal* (1935) commented that "the church is not ready to sing that yet." Harlow countered "It is not as radical as the Magnificat" (Luke 1: 46-55), but the church's con-

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Resolutions

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ability of government administrated services, especially for Third World persons who are disproportionately hurt by this epidemic.

4) SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - The UFMCC and its local churches will begin asking some difficult but important questions about sexuality and social responsibility that the AIDS crisis elicits. We especially urge our Gay brothers clergy and lay, to spend time discussing the facts, the fears, the feelings and the options for responsible sexual relating during this health crisis. Further, we urge our whole fellowship to reject the heartless social "Pariah-ing" of persons with AIDS (or suspected of having AIDS) and their friends and families.

Finally we also call for the formation of a Lesbian blood bank in the name of UFMCC for the use of persons with AIDS, which the Board of Elders will take steps to initiate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that implementation of this resolution shall be a priority issue at every level in the Fellowship.

Editor's Note: The following resolutions were passed at General Conference XI in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

I

FROM
WORLD CHURCH EXTENSION
WORKSHOP

BE IT RESOLVED that this General Conference encourages all of the congregations of the UFMCC to begin IMMEDIATELY World Church Extension consciousness raising, to include teaching and preaching, spiritual and economical responsibility.

RATIONALE: For years we have watched the phenomenal growth of this UFMCC, especially within the United States. It is a necessity for this International Fellowship to look beyond the United States and feel the need that exists in other nations and cultures.

There is a Universal Law of giving and receiving that is irreversible and works for all people, everywhere: If you give of yourself to others, who cannot benefit you as a result, you will be blessed.

We pray that you, as individuals and congregations, will continue to open up to new horizons and new ministries.

II

Editor's Note: This Resolution was referred to Government Structures & Systems for further study.

The Spring of 1983 District Conference of the Great Lakes District, UFMCC, respectfully recommends that the Toronto General Conference, UFMCC adopt the following:

WHEREAS: there is a longstanding unrest and dissatisfaction with the present credentialing procedures of the UFMCC as not always being fair, consistent or complete, and

WHEREAS: there is as yet little or no recognition of other ministries than clergy, student clergy and diaconate by the Fellowship,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this General Conference establish a Commission on Ministries to develop a theology of ministries, define standards, recommend enabling processes, and formulate judicial support procedures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission be composed of one clergy representative and one lay representative from each District, from which shall be selected a three-member executive committee to facilitate the work of the Commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission be funded to employ a research assistant, and to pay other expenses, with a total amount of $4,000.00 annually; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the next General Conference of the UFMCC.

BE IT NOTED that this resolution shall in no way interfere with the present work of the CCCC, nor shall the Commission be in any way responsible to same.

III

WHEREAS the position of student clergy

Sisters and brothers take advantage during breaktimes to relax with each other.

requires specific preparation;

WHEREAS student clergy are part of the future of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches;

WHEREAS many conference decisions affect future clergy;

WHEREAS student clergy have a vested interest in the official proceedings of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches;

WHEREAS student clergy currently have no voice in the official proceedings of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches recognize and invest student clergy as official observers at all conferences of the UFMCC.

IV

BE IT RESOLVED that this eleventh General Conference of the UFMCC hereby recognize, commend, and affirm the arduous and creative work of the Reverend Lucia Chappelle in her years of service as Dean of Samaritan Education Center.

V

BE IT RESOLVED that *all* prepaid registrants be given copies of *all* printed materials provided before and during future General Conferences.

VI

We, the General Conference of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, do hereby resolve that:

Since the United States and the Soviet Union already possess thousands of nuclear weapons and carriers, and many thousands of warheads and;

The United States spends anywhere from twenty to thirty percent of its total budget on weapons and development, and;

The United States and the Soviet Union already have the weapons and the capability to destroy the world many times over in only twenty minutes.

THEREFORE, we support a unilateral nuclear arms freeze, both in and of itself, and as a first step towards total disarmament.

We feel that this is a necessary first step towards establishing world peace. We also feel that our tax dollars could be better used for human services worldwide. And finally, we do not want our children to have to live with the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to President Reagan, Soviet Chairman Andropov, Secretary General of the United Nations, and that the Director of Christian Social Action send copies to the appropriate media.

VII

RESOLUTION FROM THE NORTHWEST DISTRICT

We, the members of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, wish to state publicly our conviction that the use of nuclear weapons, under any circumstances, is contrary to the Will of God. While there may have been just wars in the past, the inability to place traditional constraints on nuclear war now makes any moral justification impossible.

We urge our sisters and brothers in the faith communities of all nations to join us in condemning nuclear war in any form, and in calling for an immediate, verifiable, world-wide freeze on the production of nuclear weapons, a staged reduction of present nuclear arsenals, and the eventual abolition of all nuclear arms.

In the name of God, let us speak out now, lest our silence once again make us accomplices to holocaust, this one threatening the very existence of humankind.

(Adapted from a statement by faculty and students of Harvard Divinity School)

VIII

RESOLVED: That the tithe is affirmed as the scriptural standard of giving for members of Metropolitan Community Churches; and be it further

RESOLVED: that we, the Lay Delegates, the Clerical Delegates and the Elders, do hereby pledge ourselves to tithe, or to work toward tithing as a minimum standard of our own giving and of our witness in the world and to the Church; and be it further

RESOLVED: That we do call all of the Church to join us in accepting the scripturally affirmed means of supporting the Church and its ministries as the minimum standard of Christian giving.

RATIONALE: In Matthew 23:23, Jesus

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Resolutions

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said: "Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay tithes of mint and cumin, but you have overlooked the weightier demands of the Law . . .justice, mercy, and good faith. It is these that you should have practiced, without neglecting the others." These words clearly affirm the tithe as an assumed and not arguable standard. What Jesus is saying about the tithe is this: Do it! Let's not discuss it and be proud of it. Just do it! Now let's get on with more important matters, which are justice, mercy and faith. On the basis of that affirmation, we can offer no less a standard for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

IX
RESOLUTION OFFERED BY
THE BOARD OF ELDERS

BE IT RESOLVED: that the 11th General Conference instruct the new UFMCC Board of Pensions to explore options for retirement programs for all UFMCC clergy, in every nation; and that this shall be the Board's first priority after establishing the initial trust and pension plan in the United States.

FURTHER: that the Board of Pensions will report on its progress in this effort at the next General Conference.

X
RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY THE
COMMISSION ON THE LAITY

WHEREAS THE DUTIES OF THE Lay Delegate and the Local Representative to the Commission on the Laity of the District are similar;

BE IT RESOLVED that one Lay Delegate from each Church body within the UFMCC shall serve as the local representative to the District Commission on the Laity.

XI

WHEREAS the UFMCC affirms "the priesthood of all believers;" and

WHEREAS it has been standard practice in many UFMCC Churches and Districts to have Communion consecrated and celebrated by members of the Laity;

BE IT RESOLVED that General Conference affirms the right of all UFMCC ministers, clergy and lay, to celebrate and consecrate Holy Communion with equal validity at all authorized worship services, as determined by each local church.

XII
RESOLUTION FROM MCC IN THE
VALLEY, NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

Recognizing our responsibilities as a community of believers, we do now declare our support for those individuals with AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome): that we affirm to them, as well as their spouses, families and friends, our readiness to give assistance and comfort to them in whatever ways possible.

Recognizing the value and importance of human contact within any community, we, the UFMCC, pledge that, collectively and individually, we will offer our staffs and congregations to those who suffer pain and despair as a result of this condition; that we will offer comfort through hope; that we will bring communion and prayer; that we will assist in alleviating any and all problems through the sharing of the love of God wherever and whenever possible. ■

Members of MCC Toronto at their information tables.

continued from page 2

ask, don't these members of the established churches already know God? And my response would be - Yes, they know some things of God and about God, but very few realize the implications of God's universal love and concern. Very few. The British theologian Norman Pittenger, in his book GAY LIFESTYLES (published by Universal Fellowship Press), wrote something that really struck me:

> *"I think that the religiously minded heterosexual who wants nothing to do with homosexuals stands in need of conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for Jesus associated with the outcasts, befriended those whom society rejected, and was concerned only to win all whom he could reach to an understanding of the illimitable love of the God whom he called his, and their, heavenly Parent."*

I really think that any church-goer who is under the delusion that God despises Gay and Lesbian people and that God would never work through such people does not know the One who sent Christ Jesus into this world. Any church-goer who regards sex as "dirty" or as a necessary evil (and there are lots of them who do) does not know the One who created this world, who created sex, and who sent Christ Jesus to live a fully human life in this world. Any church-goer who regards God as male and therefore thinks that all of God's ministers and spokespersons should be male does not know the God that Jesus disclosed, and they don't know their Bible very well either. We exist as a witness to all the Christian churches in this world to give them a more complete picture of the God they claim to worship.

No matter how much Christianity is distorted and warped by Christians, we in MCC cannot be anything else - because we are grasped, moved and directed by Jesus' message and lifestyle of love. MCC came into being and it continues to grow because we feel compelled to present and live Christianity as we know it. We are here to show the world the God we know in Jesus, the God we know as the ever-present Spirit.

MCC certainly does not have a monopoly on knowing the truth about God, but what we *do* know we need to share - with Gay and Lesbian people, with other Christians and churches, with anyone who will listen to us. Because of our past woundedness, oppression and rejection, we have come to know God better as Savior, Liberator, Lover, Rock of Strength and Healer. We can communicate what we have experienced and what we believe. We can communicate it by our compassion in words and in action, and by participating in healing and reconciling.

When I think of all that MCC is called to be and to do in this world, I sometimes despair because our numbers and our resources are too small to meet the needs. But when this despair comes upon me, God usually finds a way to remind me, "Just do what I ask you to do. This is my ministry, and I will take care of it." And I can only say to God, "Amen - so be it."

Would you join me in prayer:

Thank you, God, for bringing us together in this new and different church called MCC. Help us to see ourselves as you see us, God. Help us to see the mission that you have laid out before us to be a blessing. Give us the courage, the strength, the patience, and the compassion to do what you ask us to do. Teach us, God. Fill us with your Spirit. Use us. Amen. ■

Samaritan

REFLECTIONS

by Bruce Kassalow
Operations Manager
Samaritan

When the General Conference Management Team hired me to go to Toronto, I was awed and apprehensive. I had been Operations Manager of Samaritan for less than a year. Was I genuinely prepared to come face to face with the official biannual gathering of a denomination I had been acquainted with for so short a time? Could I leave Samaritan inactive for so *long* a time?

I began behind-the-scenes planning with Richard Ploen almost immediately. My first assignment was to assemble the MANY GIFTS SHOP. The eminent Kerry Brown joined forces with us shortly thereafter. She brought with her an invaluable wealth of information from her vast experience.

My assignments broadened as time went on. Many adjustments were made. We were beset by obstacles which most certainly would have defeated a group less dedicated. We tested our powers of creativity to the very last second.

Even as people began walking into the University of Toronto Medical Sciences Building, Conference administration remained a challenge. Many vital materials had not yet arrived from Los Angeles. When everything was well under way, it became necessary to move worship services into air conditioning, out of the record heat and humidity. And so on. I left a day and a half after the formal conclusion of Conference, working steadily until the hour before my departure.

People are writing to me from across the country and around the world asking me about General Conference. I have difficulty answering these inquiries. My personal experience was not inside those auditoriums. I was busily at work outside the doors with the most dedicated people I have ever known. I cannot thank our Canadian friends enough for their undying loyalty. I will even say that the spirit outside the hall was as great as the spirit within.

Some people laud the recent General Conference while others deride it, whatever their reasons. Personally, I shall treasure it as one of the great experiences of my life. Beyond question, the UFMCC dream is alive and well.

Classifieds

WANTED

Preludes (for piano) based on hymns in MCC Hymnal or on your favorite hymns. These will be published in a collection available at nominal cost to Fellowship churches. Please write down your music neatly in black ink since we will not recopy it. Send to: L. Israel, MCC Harrisburg, P.O. Box 3897, Harrisburg, PA 17105.

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Shekinah & The Sparkle

a short story

by
BRUCE M. BARTON
Lay Minister

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, in a town not so very far away, lived four children. They lived with their father. Mother had been very sick a year before, and went to live with Jesus in Heaven.

Their mother had lots of names. Mommie, Mother, Mom, but Dad just called her Jane Ann. There had been something extra special about being at home when she was there. She seemed to always have a sparkle in her eyes, and was always humming a beautiful tune. The children loved to run home after school and just sit outside the kitchen door for awhile before they went in just to hear Mother humming to herself. But that was before.

Now, the only noise you could hear in the big old kitchen was the tick-tock of the big clock on the wall. Father seemed very quiet these days, and sometimes looked out the window for a long time. Everyone knew that he must be thinking about Jane Ann, and the humming, and the sparkle.

One day, while they were walking home from school, Mary and Sarah Jane and the boys bumped into a little old woman. Oh, I don't mean that they met her on the pathway. I mean they really bumped into her! They had got into the habit of scuffing their feet in the dust as they walked, and they kept their heads down, never really seeing anything on the path except the dust. That day, they walked just as they always had, heads down, drooping lower lips, and scuffing in the dust, and they ran right into her, the little old woman, and she and the children fell into a big pile right in the middle of the path! My, they were surprised! But there she was, all covered with dust, and her shawl looked kind of funny all tangled up around her head.

The children were afraid to laugh, though, and almost afraid to make a move. They looked at each other for just a minute, surprise all over their faces, and then hurried to help the woman to her feet and dust off her big skirt. All four of the children were ready to be scolded, and sort of waited for it. But nothing happened. The woman didn't even look at them as she adjusted herself in her big ruffled skirt, in the middle of the path.

Then it happened. She looked up at them with her big brown eyes, and started to giggle. It seemed to come from somewhere deep down inside her, and like the gurgling of the water pump out in the field, suddenly burst from her with a loud haw haw haw, tee hee hee, ohh ho ho!! It seemed like she was going to pop, she laughed so hard! It surprised the children so that for a minute they just stood there and stared at her with very wide eyes. Then, they too started to giggle. Oh, they were very little tee hee's, and almost under their breath, but soon they were almost rolling on the ground they were laughing so hard. You know, they laughed so hard that the tears started to roll down their cheeks, all of them. Even the old woman! Finally, when they could start to speak, she pulled out the biggest handkerchief they had ever seen and wiped everyone's "laughing tears," that's what she called them, even her own. It was a good thing that she had it, too, because with everyone laughing so hard, and all of the dust, and all those dirty faces, they had stripes down their faces where the "laughing tears" had run down their cheeks.

"There," she said. "Now we all look wonderful! What's everyone's names?" She asked. But before anyone could answer, she said, and quite proudly, "Mine's Shekinah. It's different, don'cha think? Shekinah? My Mum called me that, and so do I. It's from the Bible. Means gentle, or Holy Spirit, or sumpthin like that. Anyway, I like it. Do you?"

"Ye...yes," they seemed to all stutter at once. "It's a very nice name."

"I've never heard it before, but it is nice," said Sarah Jane, trying to be as grown up as the rest of the kids.

"I like it a whole lot," said John.

And that's how it all began.

They all had lots of questions for Shekinah. They wanted to know where she came from, and why hadn't they seen her before.

"Well, ya see, I do lots of walking around the whole countryside, and this was my first walk up this path. Now I got four new friends, and I think that's just grand!"

"Do you live around here?" asked Heber, just now brave enough to peek from behind Mary, where he thought he was hiding.

"Oh, no, honey. I live a very long way from here, and it takes many days, and many paths to get to where I live," she said. "I just like to get out and see as much of this old world as I can."

"Say!" Sarah Jane said almost too loud. "Would you like some lemonade?"

"Oh, yes! That sounds just yummy. I was just getting thirsty for some lemonade just before, well, you know, just before we bumped into each other." Shekinah couldn't help the giggle that jumped out. It just happened, and then they were all laughing again as they started off toward the house. But this time they could see her face as she laughed. There it was! The sparkle they knew so well from Mother's eyes! What was it? Who was this woman who just happened to be on the path?

They all noticed it. Even Heber, who usually only noticed butterflies! And they were surprised.

Then, even more surprising, Shekinah started to hum a song. It was Mother's song! Not hers, but Mother's song! How did she know it? Who told her she could hum Mother's song?

It was a good thing that they reached the house just about that time, because all four children were getting very confused.

Sarah Jane started making the cool lemonade, and Shekinah sat down with a thump on the kitchen chair and watched. Everyone had become very quiet when she had started humming. Shekinah had noticed.

"Oh my," she thought to herself, "They sure got quiet! Wonder what's up."

"Hey!" she said. "How come no one has said a word to me since we got here? I hope you aren't . . . " She stopped.

"Aren't what?" asked Mary.

"Well, aren't afraid of me," said Shekinah, sort of drooping her head.

"Oh, no," piped in Heber. "We aren't afraid of you. It's just, well, it's just . . . ."

"It's just that since Mother went to live in Heaven, we haven't heard the tune you were humming," interrupted John.

"Oh. I see. It makes you a little homesick for your Momma. Well, I'm sorry if it hurt, but it is a wonderful song, and if your Momma sang it, I know she must have been a wonderful mother, too. Wanna learn it?"

"Oh yes! Please teach it to us," they all said at once.

"OK. It goes like this . . . ."

It only took a few minutes, and they were all singing at the tops of their voices the new, but oh so special song.

"Jesus loves me, this I know . . . ."

And the sparkle was there. In Shekinah's eyes, and it sort of lit up the room, and it seemed to light up the whole world, just then.

"Can you stay for supper?" they asked. "Father is gone to the next town and won't be back until morning. We would be very happy if you would."

"Why yes, I think I can. But only if you let me do the cooking. I think it would be fun, and I'll show you some fun things to cook."

They all set about getting out pots and pans, and all sorts of things to cook. Even though they didn't have a lot in the kitchen, somehow in just a short while, Shekinah whipped up a wonderful supper.

After they had eaten just about as much as they thought possible, Shekinah got up, went to the stove, and started mixing something up in a big bowl.

"I'm gonna make you a treat for dessert. I don't exactly know what they call it, but I call it ker-plop stuff, and that's good enough for me. I call it that because it goes ker-plop when you put it in the pan."

After only a few minutes, she was finished, and everyone ate, and ate, and ate. It was wonderful! Ker-plop was sort of, well not really a pancake, and not really a cookie, but, well, sort of both all wrapped up together.

After the dishes were done and put away, they all went in in front of the fire, and Shekinah told them stories. All about a man from long long ago, in a far away country. All about things he taught, and what he did for the people, and what the people did to him. Shekinah told them about Jesus.

"That's in the song, isn't it, about Jesus," said Heber, almost too sleepy to talk.

"Yes," said Shekinah. "It is about Jesus. And that is what keeps me happy. Did you notice something in my eyes today? Just a little something different?"

"Why yes," they said. "But how did you know?"

"Well, it's called love. Jesus taught us to love one another, and I seem to run into people all of the time to love. Why, just look at you kids! This morning, when I talked to Jesus in my prayers, I asked to meet someone extra special today, and just look! I met four!" And the sparkle was there in her eyes, and it seemed to light up even her words, and made kind of a warm feeling inside their hearts.

It was getting very late, and even though there was no school the next day, it was past bedtime. Shekinah asked if it was alright if she slept in front of the fire, and "Please do!!" was their answer.

When the children opened their eyes that next morning, they hurried to dress and run downstairs to find Shekinah. But there was no one in front of the fireplace. They ran to the kitchen, and it was empty too, except for a big bowl full of ker-plop stuff ready to cook.

Sarah Jane saw it first, the note on the table, and as tears started to fill up in her eyes, she handed it to Mary to read. They all sat down, and the sad faces were back. As Mary opened the folded piece of paper, something wonderful happened! They thought they heard humming, and they could have sworn they heard a ker-plop over by the stove! When they looked at each other, they were even more surprised! There it was!! The sparkle in each child's eyes!

The note was wonderful, too. Shekinah had drawn a funny picture of all of them on the pathway in a great big heap, and she wrote a little note at the end, about Jesus.

"You know," she wrote, "after Jesus rose from the grave, and was getting ready to go back up to Heaven to be with God, He told the people, 'Listen, Don't be sad. Remember, I am with you always.' And that's what I want to tell you. What is in your heart, and whatever you love, or whoever you love, they can be with you always, too. Even me! Remember, Jesus loves you, this I know . . . and so do I!"

Father came into the kitchen, and it was buzzing with activity. All of the children were humming and singing, and over by the stove, he was sure that he heard a strange sound that went sort of like ker-plop. And the faces!! The bright happy faces!!

When they saw him, everyone ran to him and hugged him, and all at the same time tried to tell him about Shekinah, and the singing, and the pathway, and Jesus.

Father just sat there and listened. Then he saw it, the sparkle in their eyes! And a little tear fell from his big eyes, or it looked like a tear. But I think it was maybe a little more than that. It was loneliness. It was gone. And when the children looked up into their father's face, it was there, too. The sparkle from Shekinah. The sparkle from their mother's eyes, but more than that. I think it was the same sparkle in Jesus' eyes when he told us, 'For lo, I am with you always.'

And Jesus is!

The End

Inclusive Lectionary

The Division of Education and Ministry of the NCC will be offering an inclusive language lectionary for voluntary, experimental use in worship, group study and individual use. It is hoped that this version will spur people to greater sensitivity to language which speaks to and for all persons. We invite those who worship and who study the Bible to join in the effort to find ways to express our faith inclusively.

The Inclusive Language Lectionary represents an important inter-denominational effort to express the Christian message to all persons without bias. Based on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as well as original Greek and Hebrew tests, readings in the Lectionary have been recast so that all who hear the word of God proclaimed will have a sense of equality; no one will feel excluded by language.

Like most other standard lectionaries, this one follows the pattern of a three-year cycle. The first volume, with readings determined by the Consultation on Church Union, will be ready for use during advent of 1983 and continue through Pentecost, 1984. This will be followed by separate volumes for Cycle B, ready in 1984, and Cycle C, available in 1985. Readings in the second and third volumes will be based on selections from the North American Committee on Calendar and Lectionary.

This Lectionary, the first of its kind to be published by an ecumenical church council, is a landmark attempt to rethink the language of Scripture as inclusive of both women and men.

THE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE LECTIONARY: READINGS FOR YEAR A. To be published by Westminster Press for John Knox Press, United Church Press, and Westminster Press. 6" x 9" paperbound, $7.95 (tentative price). Publication date is October 14, 1983. ■

CONFERENCE at home

by Sue Kirkland
Collective Member

Will the General Conference packets arrive on time? Is the Financial Report complete? When will they call, and what will they need? Those were just a few of the questions that rushed through our minds as the last staff person was dropped off at the airport on July 7. For most of us left behind, the previous ten weeks had been a maze of information and stress.

Cory Allison, Tony Gotlibowski, Paul Nance and I had begun our task in the Fellowship Offices in early May. Like any new group working together, we experienced the usual adjustments in personal interaction - job interpretation - direction and planning. Because we were new, we felt an added stress when compiling denominational data and when deadlines seemed "too close for comfort." Fortunately veterans Kurt Kreisler and Maryann Mulligan added their calm expertise during the critical Conference preparation.

Conference week was a surprise of silence and inactivity. Kurt said, "It was like being in a vacuum. I was here but all the activity was going on somewhere else." There was a great concern among all of us that nothing had been overlooked and all would run smoothly in Toronto. Throughout the week the staff quizzed me after each call from Toronto. Were things going well? What about the worship experience? Who was elected?

Kurt summed it up best when he said, "I feel like a parent who has worked, taught and tried to help the child - but the child has left home I am no longer in control." The work was completed - the work they had left in our care - we were no longer in control.

The sense of accomplishment began as the phone started ringing again and we heard the reports on Conference. Praise God, our initiation was over! With one General Conference behind us we are now setting our sights on excellence for the upcoming years. ▪

NEW MISSIONS:

MCC Salem, OR
MCC of the Redwoods, San Rafael, CA
MCC Spokane, WA
MCC Birmingham, AL
MCC Montgomery, AL
MCC Corpus Christi, TX
Quad Cities MCC, Davenport, IA
MCC Topeka, KS
Morning Star MCC, Worcester, MA
Divine Redeemer MCC, Glendale, CA
Maranatha MCC, Hayward, CA
MCC Charleston, SC
MCC New Haven, CT
ICM Mexico City, Mexico

NEW CHARTERS:

MCC Dayton Parish, Dayton, OH
MCC at Boise, ID

coflict

by Paula Schoenwether
Editor

General Conference was not without conflict. Our Third World sisters and brothers experienced overt racism by a University of Toronto employee.

During Conference week many groups had been meeting in dormitory lounges and this was fine with the University. On Thursday night about 30 Third World women and men met in Wilson Hall with Rev. Renee McCoy facilitating.

After meeting for an hour the woman working at the desk interrupted the meeting saying, "I'm responding to complaints from people in the dorm that you people were wandering around the floors." Several people from the group denied that this had happened but the woman refused to listen and told them if they did not leave she would call the police. There was anger. There were tears. Many people left in a hurry while some challenged her.

(It's important to know that many of the women in our group were staying in the dorm and that in order to even be on a floor a key was needed.)

Some white women, also from MCC, arrived and they, too, tried to talk to the woman, who would not listen.

Another group of ours, the Older Women's Sharing Group, was meeting in the same dorm and overheard what transpired, and left the building in solidarity.

The next evening, the Women's Sharing Group was scheduled to meet in the same lounge. We did. Our experience was, however, very different.

The Women's group, primarily white women, discussed whether or not we should even be sitting in the same lounge. After rationalizing and justifying why it was alright to stay, we agreed to write a letter as our way to protest.

We white women participating in the sharing had to face our white priviledge. No one asked us to leave or threatened to call the police. But, one of our Third World sisters did take the time and energy to confront we white women with that very priviledge.

Education quickly took place. Many of us realized that meeting in the lounge

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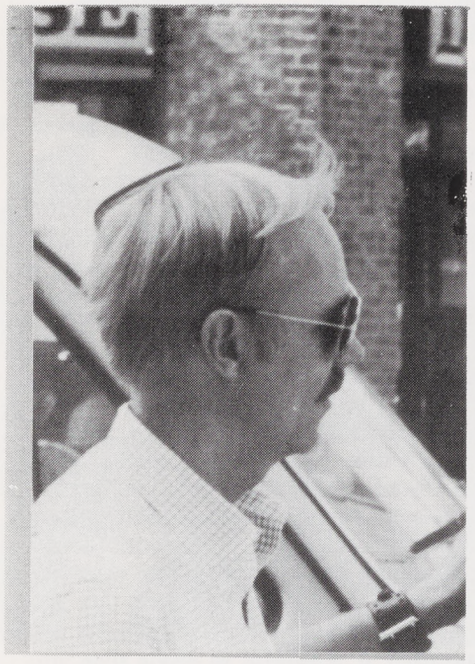
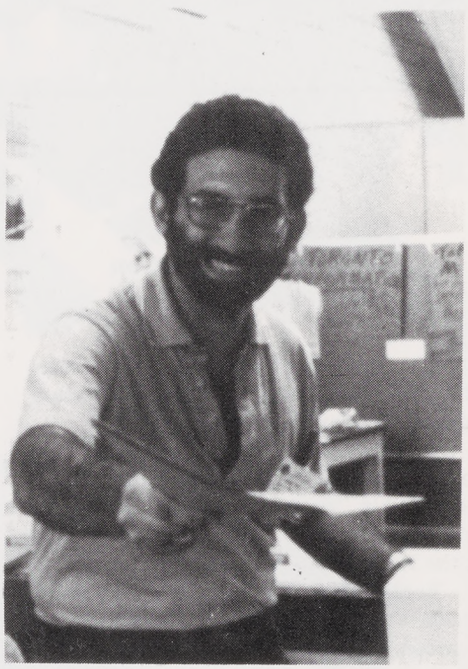
someone who cares. And, from then on ... all you have to do is remember that you don't have to plan on not drinking forever. Just for today. Tell yourself that you just won't take a drink today. And the days mount up . . . and the months . . . and the years.

The quality of your life will begin to improve and you'll be glad you're alive for a change. You'll experience freedom again. You'll be able to wake up each morning and say to yourself, "Thank God I'm sober!" And mean it! Smiles and laughter will come easier to you and you'll form more lasting and satisfying relationships. The attitudes of others will change toward you. In short . . . you'll be happier and healthier. Worth aiming for? You got it. GO FOR IT! ▪





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meant we were not in solidarity with our Third World sisters and brothers nor had we taken the incident seriously enough.

We had chosen comfort and used excuses to justify our actions. It was a painful but necessary experience.

We left the lounge and took to the lawn. Again, the group's sensitivity was challenged. The lawn was not conducive to our hearing impaired sisters who could now not see people well enough to read lips.

Again we moved. We were fewer now but there was even more to discuss and work out.

The University was also confronted. Rev. Nancy Wilson, representing the Board of Elders and Kerry Brown, Assistant Conference Coordinator, met with Maurice Jones, a University official. Wilson said she told Jones that, "We believe this was a racist action. We believe the complaints were received because there was a group of People of Color in the building."

Wilson said that she and Brown told him the University Staff should be better equipped to handle conflict. They gave Jones the name of the woman and he promised to follow up, investigate and send a letter of apology to the Third World Sharing Group in care of the Fellowship.

No letter has been received.

fellowship news
our journey

Chicago Area MCC's Join Church Federation of Greater Chicago

The Church Federation of Greater Chicago voted to accept into membership three MCC congregations.

After a lengthy debate, the governing board voted 18-12 that the MCC met membership requirements. The three churches, Good Shepherd Parish, Church of the Resurrection and Holy Covenant.

Because of the favorable vote the Greek Orthodox Church withdrew its membership.

Joining the three MCC groups is a newly formed feasibility group called Redeemer MCC. All four churches participated in Chicago's annual Gay Pride Week interfaith service.

Deacon's Pantry Successful Outreach

by Raymond Taylor Deacon

When we first moved into our present building three years ago, it became evident that there was a need in the community for some way to help families in need of food. A Deacon's pantry was set up to give food to these families. The pantry grew quite large and we decided to keep records beginning in September of 1982. We have had people sent to us from the local welfare office and the State Department of Human Resources. The food in this pantry is collected as people from the congregation bring it in and from some monies from the Deacon's Fund. We have served 104 families 387 times. This is a total of 377 people.

We at MCC San Antonio feel very blessed to be able to have a ministry of this sort and thank God for the opportunity. God has been good to our congregation and the church here.

Luke 6:38 "For the same measure that you give, it will be measured back to you."

LETTERS

Dear friends at *JOURNEY*,

We had a bad storm today so I stayed in instead of going to church. The last few days I've been reading my latest issue of *JOURNEY* and read some more this morning.

I'm not a member of UFMCC (yet, anyway) but I find your magazine to be affirming, reassuring and inspiring. I am a Gay man who's had three years of seminary and am moving to the Bay Area this fall for more. I'm not sure what my call is or what I want to do but *JOURNEY* helps me see past Gay stereotypes which I've sometimes internalized and see a true genuine spirituality that I admire and envy. Thanks for the role model!

I plan to become involved in several Gay religious groups in California and MCC may very well be one of them (I attended the study group here in Sioux Falls and led it once or twice).

I enjoyed the article especially on "Christian Anti-Semitism" as this is something I notice more than I used to and I struggle with passages of the New Testament that are (or have been construed to be) anti-Jewish.

Thanks for your wonderful publication.

You're a winner in my book. Thanks for your support and example.

Sincerely,
Name Withheld

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servatism prevailed. When that hymnal was revised in 1964, another change was made which reflected the conservative political fabric of the United States in the early 1960's. The second half of the third stanza, "Forbid false love of country that blinds us to your call" was altered to "O grant that love of country may help us hear (thy) call." The UFMCC *Trial Hymnal* (1993) is the only contemporary hymnal to retain the original statement.

This hymn is appropriate to the season of Kingdomtide observed in many UFMCC congregations. It might also be sung on national or patriotic days, or at services which emphasize Christian Social Action.

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will never enter the kingdom takes on a whole different meaning.

– Any text that we deal with must be placed within the context of the Bible as a whole and the overreaching values that the Bible puts forward. Statements that seem to support salvation by works must be seen in the context of salvation by grace for example.

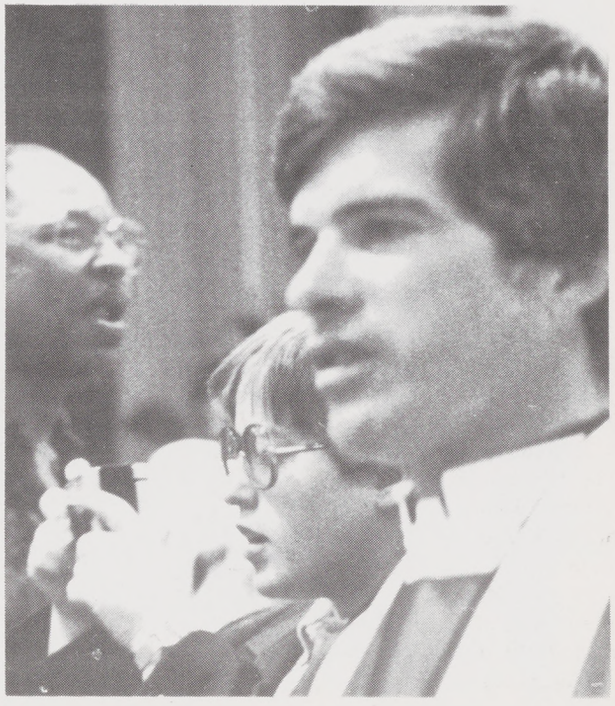
– Looking at male and female equality and mutuality it is helpful to divide time into three periods: 1. The pre-fall or pre-lapse world dealt with in Genesis 1 and 2. This presents a model of how God intended things to be. 2. The fallen or post-lapse world begins in Genesis 3. This is a time period when humanity is living under the law of sin and death. Adam and Eve felt that they knew what was in their own interest better than God. 3. The third time period is that of the fallen and redeemed world where through Christ equality and mutuality is restored.

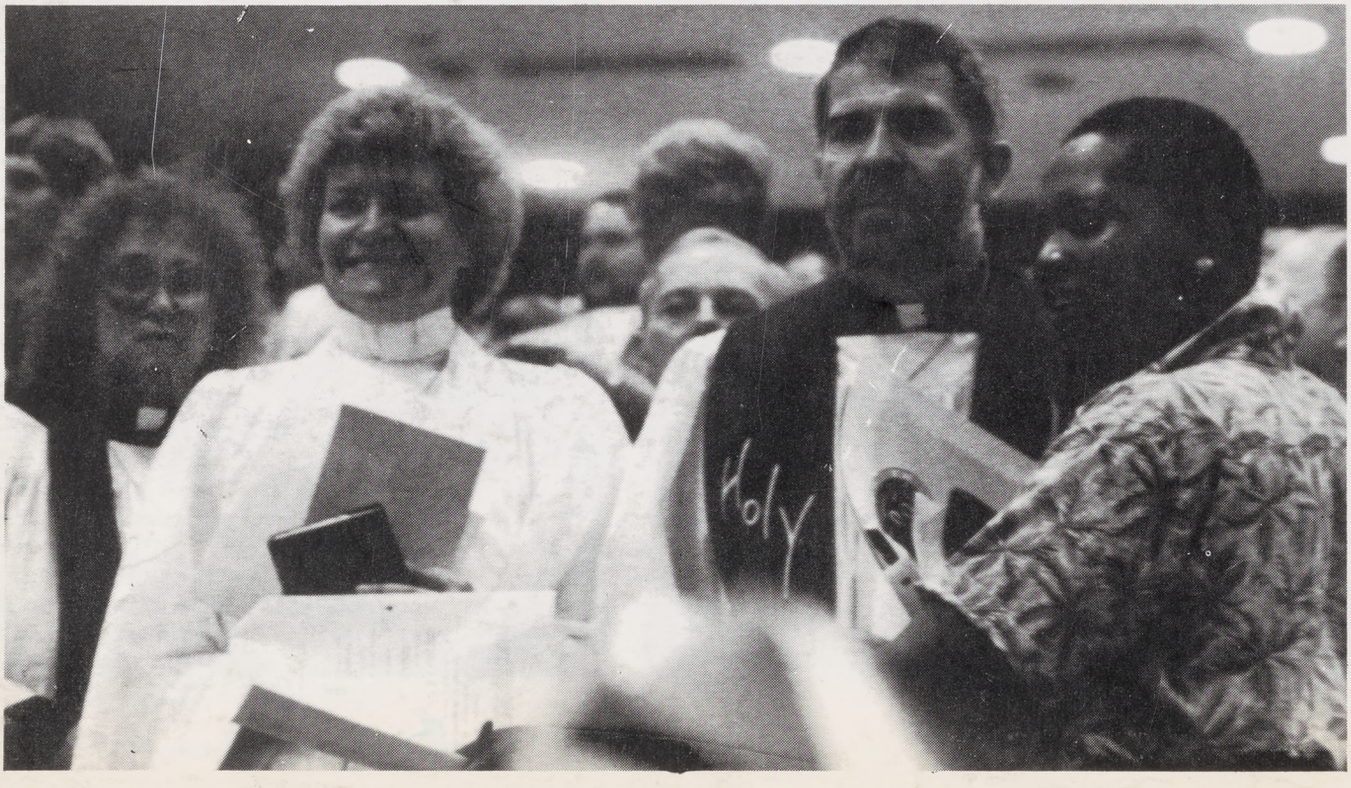
– In order to put down Lesbian and Gay men you have to deny the following principles:

1. Sexuality is a good gift of God.
2. Internal reality is what counts when evaluating acts and relationships - a person's motives and intentions must be considered as well as the quality of the relationship that is being considered.
3. God's love is unconditional and salvation is by grace.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED DURING THE PRESENTATION:

The Redemption of God by Carter Heywood
God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality by Phyliss Trible
Dreaming the Dark by Starhawk
In Memory of Her by Elizabeth Schussler-Fiorenza




Holy